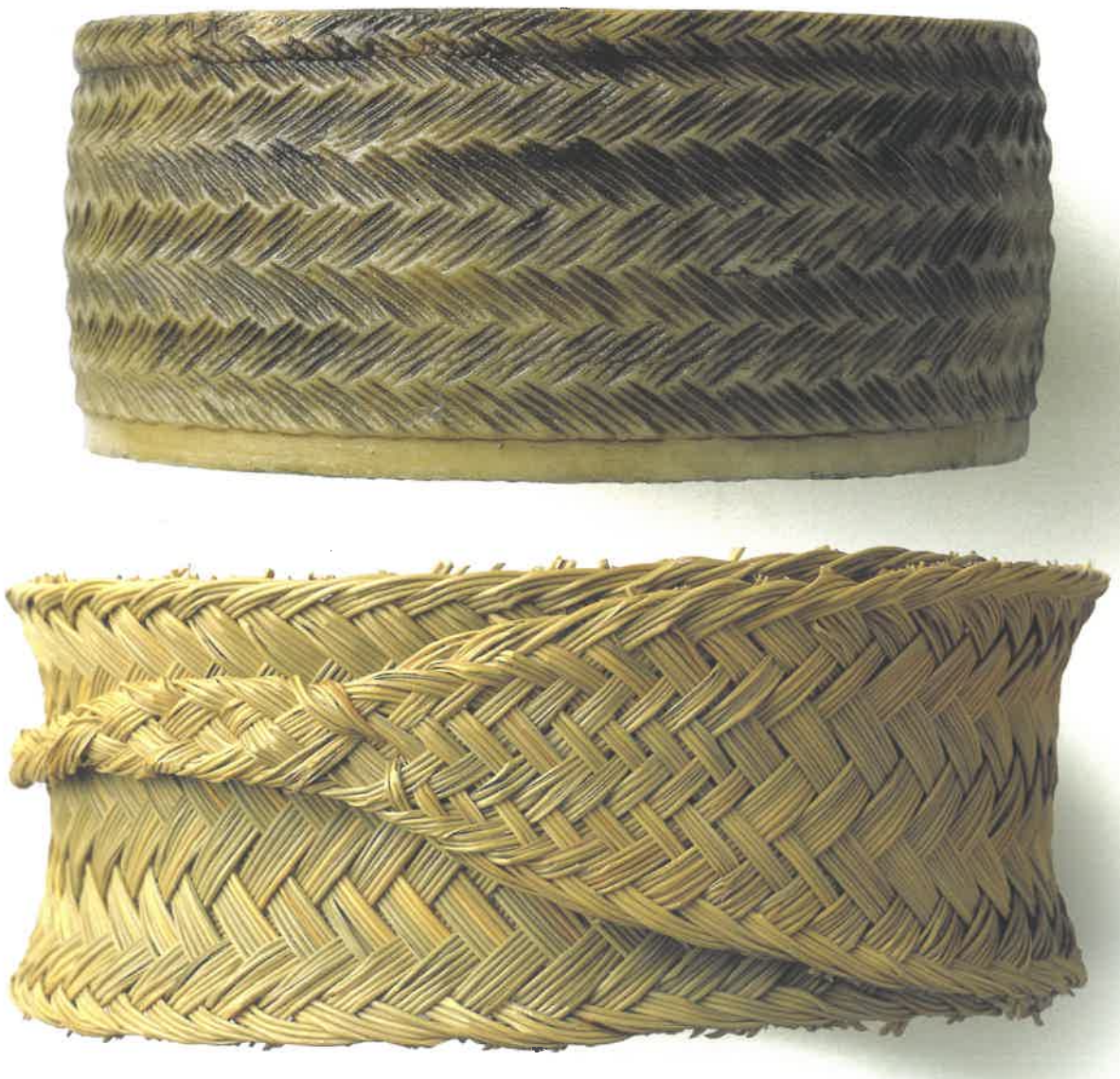
SPAIN GOURMETOUR

Food, Wine & Travel Magazine



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January-April 2004

Rías Baixas. Which Way at the Crossroads?

Tasting Tapas in Bilbao

Golden Peach Country: Calanda

Touring the Cheese Terroirs

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New Year's Eve in Bilbao? Why ever not? You don't have to go to the ends of the earth for a change of scene—at least, our European readers don't!

It would certainly be a New Year's Eve with a difference: you could follow our suggested tapas route around the town's bars and small restaurants (as you'll see, there are plenty to choose from). And then, of course, there's the Guggenheim....

But if you're more of a stay-at-home type, we have some suggestions for you, too. Celebrate with a bottle of Rías Baixas, about whose Designation of Origin you can read here. Unless, that is, you prefer to try out the wines featured in Japanese sommelier Shinya Tasaki's personal selection.

We also visit Calanda, birthplace of film director Luis Buñuel, much changed since his day and now the production hub of 4,500 tons of peaches which are ripened by a curious process.

This issue keeps up the good work of spreading the word about Spain's wonderful—and still largely undiscovered—cheeses. Our bodegas-with-hotels series visits Galicia for its last episode, and we also round off our architecture of wine series with a look at the latest creations of internationally acclaimed Spanish architects.

And don't forget to visit our web site: www.spaingourmetour.com

The whole team sends you all our good wishes for a very happy 2004.

Cathy Boirac
Editor-in-chief

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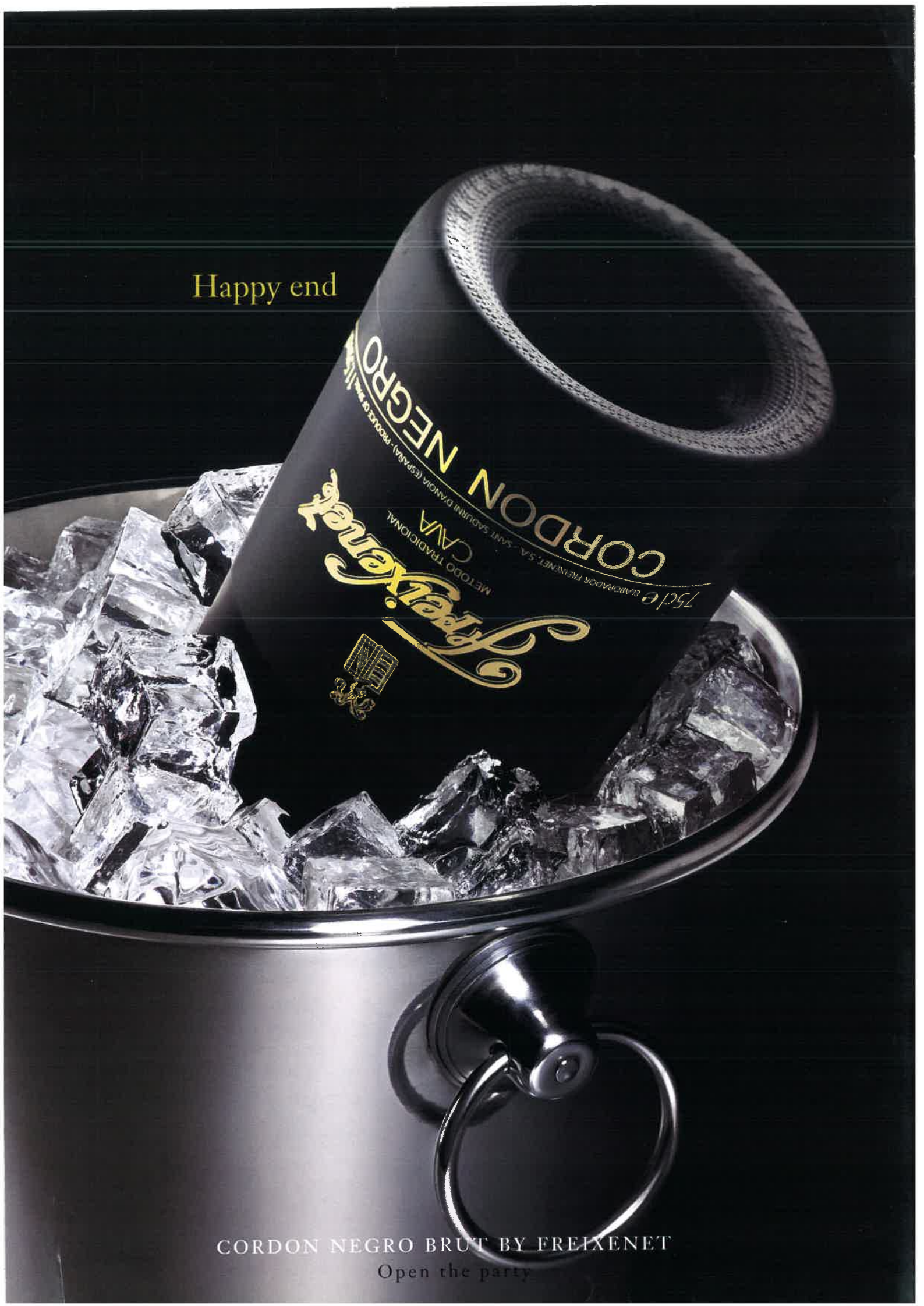
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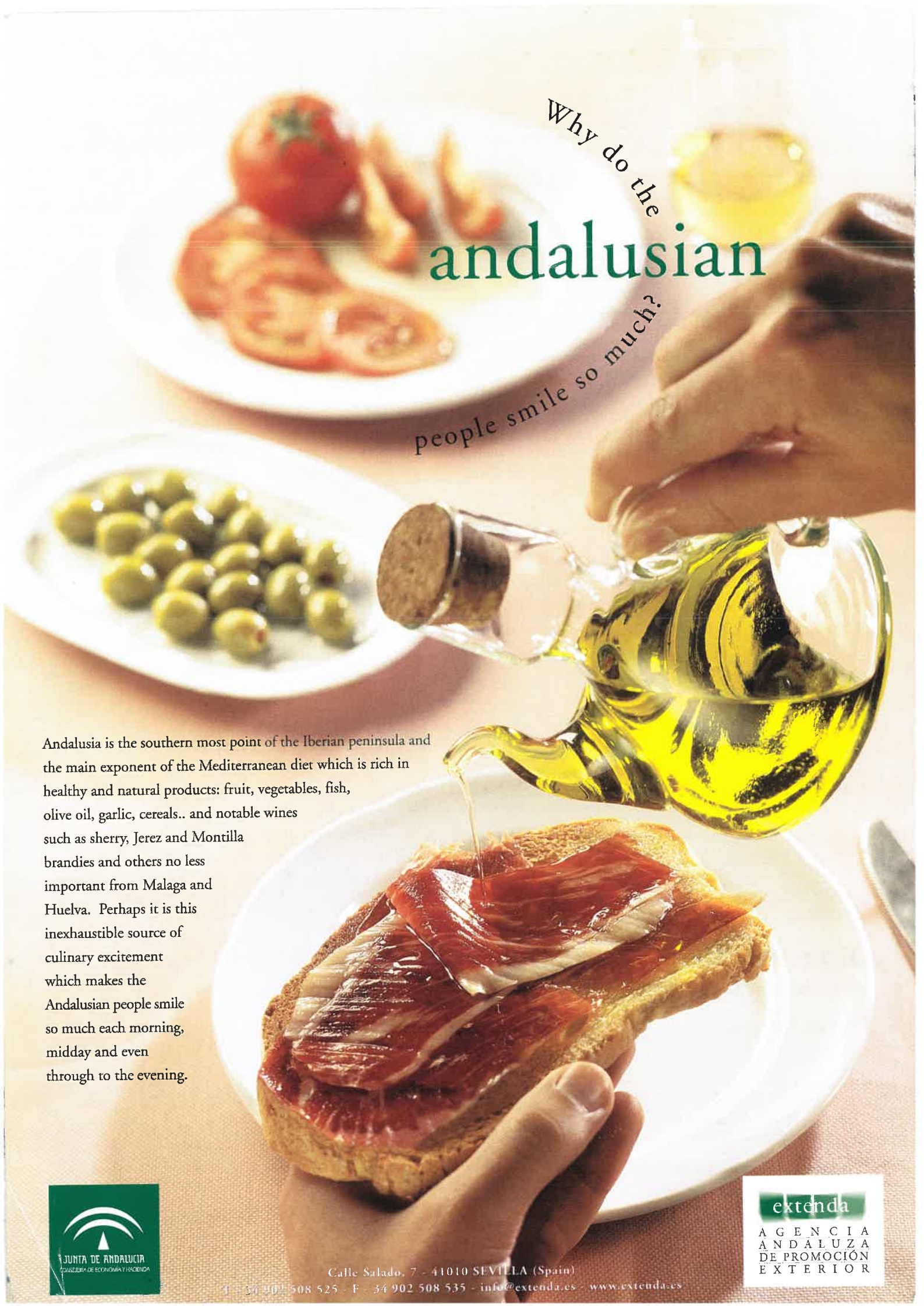
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Andalusia is the southern most point of the Iberian peninsula and the main exponent of the Mediterranean diet which is rich in healthy and natural products: fruit, vegetables, fish, olive oil, garlic, cereals.. and notable wines such as sherry, Jerez and Montilla brandies and others no less important from Malaga and Huelva. Perhaps it is this inexhaustible source of culinary excitement which makes the Andalusian people smile so much each morning, midday and even through to the evening.
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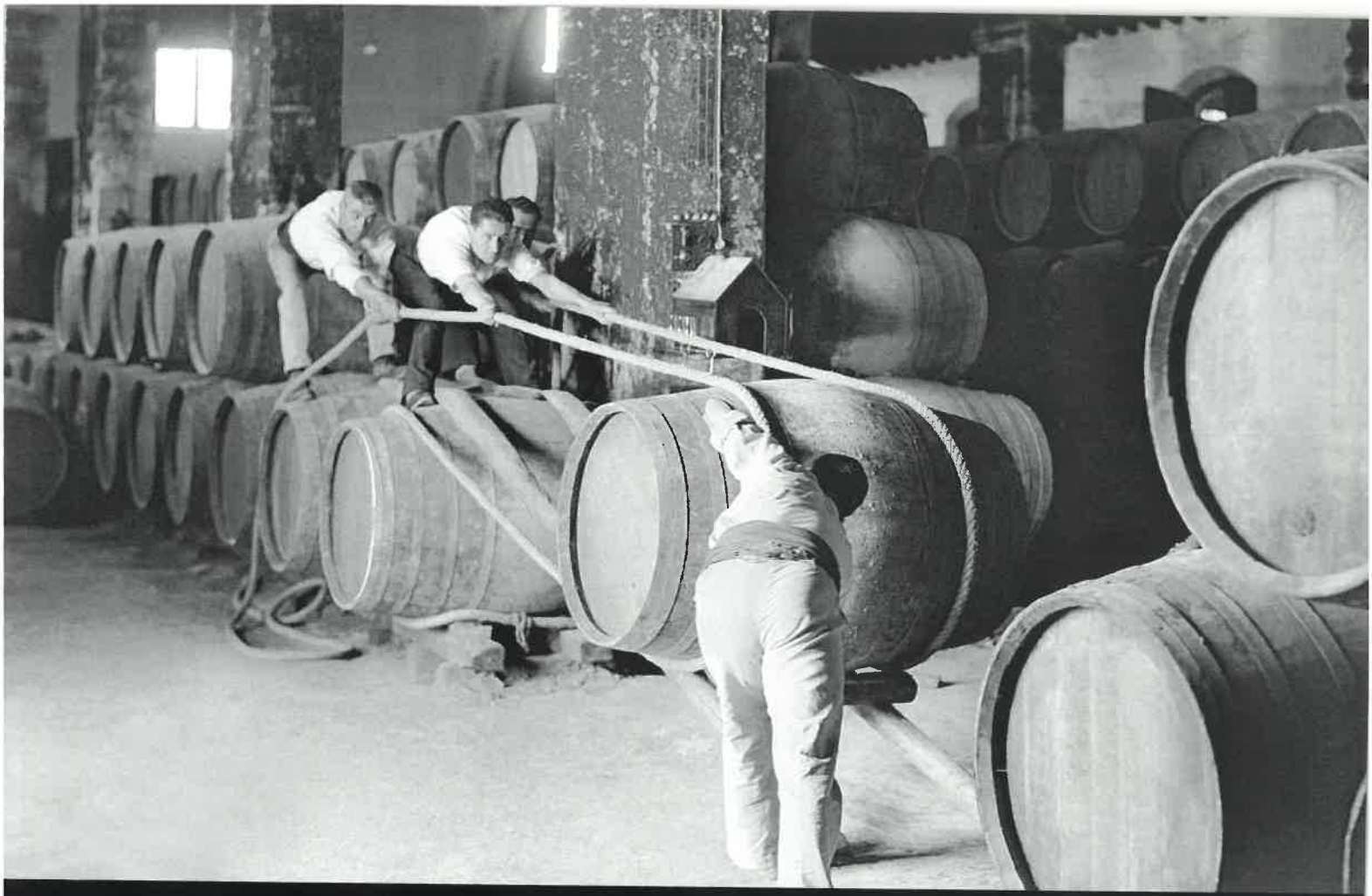

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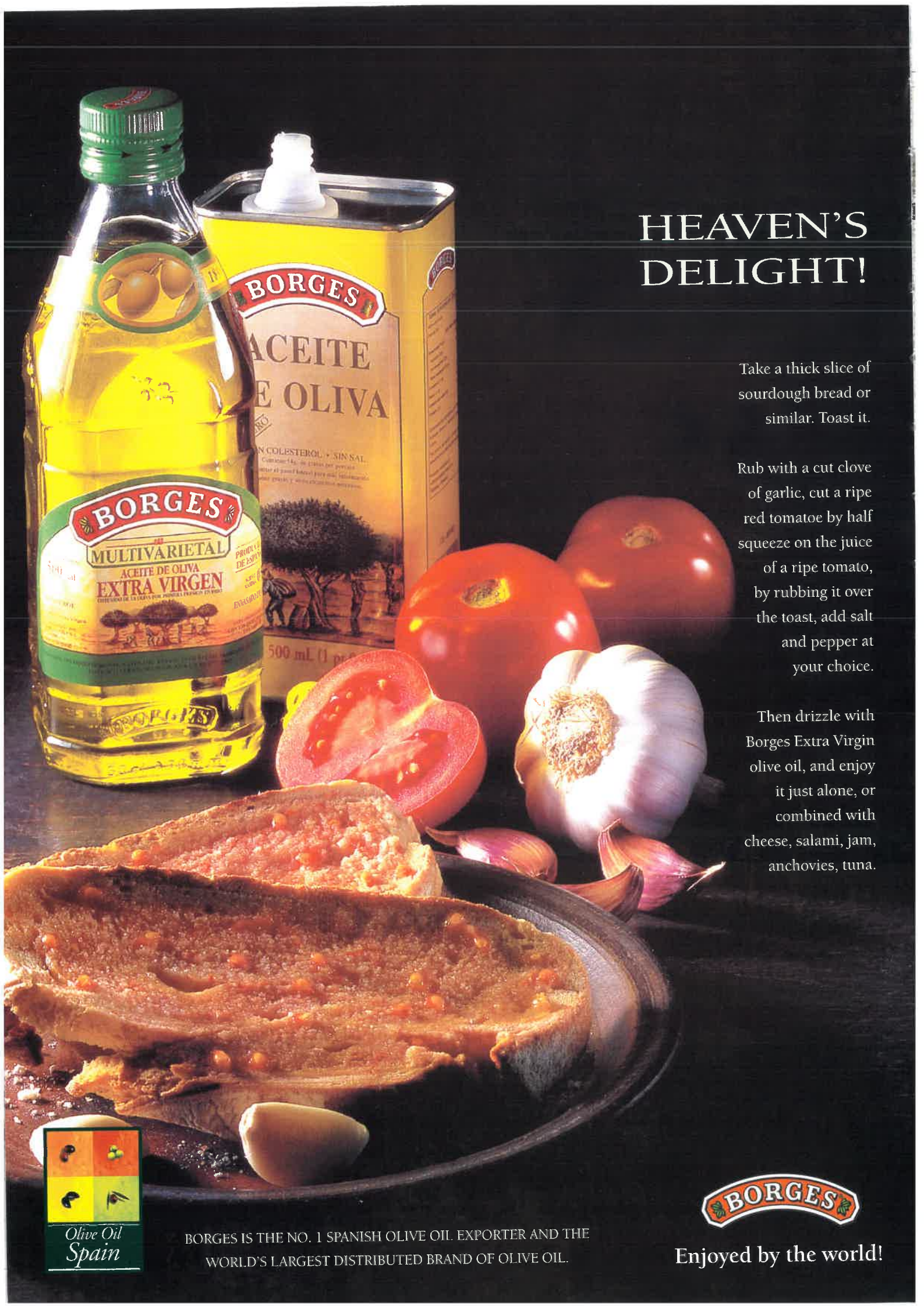

HEAVEN'S DELIGHT!

Take a thick slice of sourdough bread or similar. Toast it.

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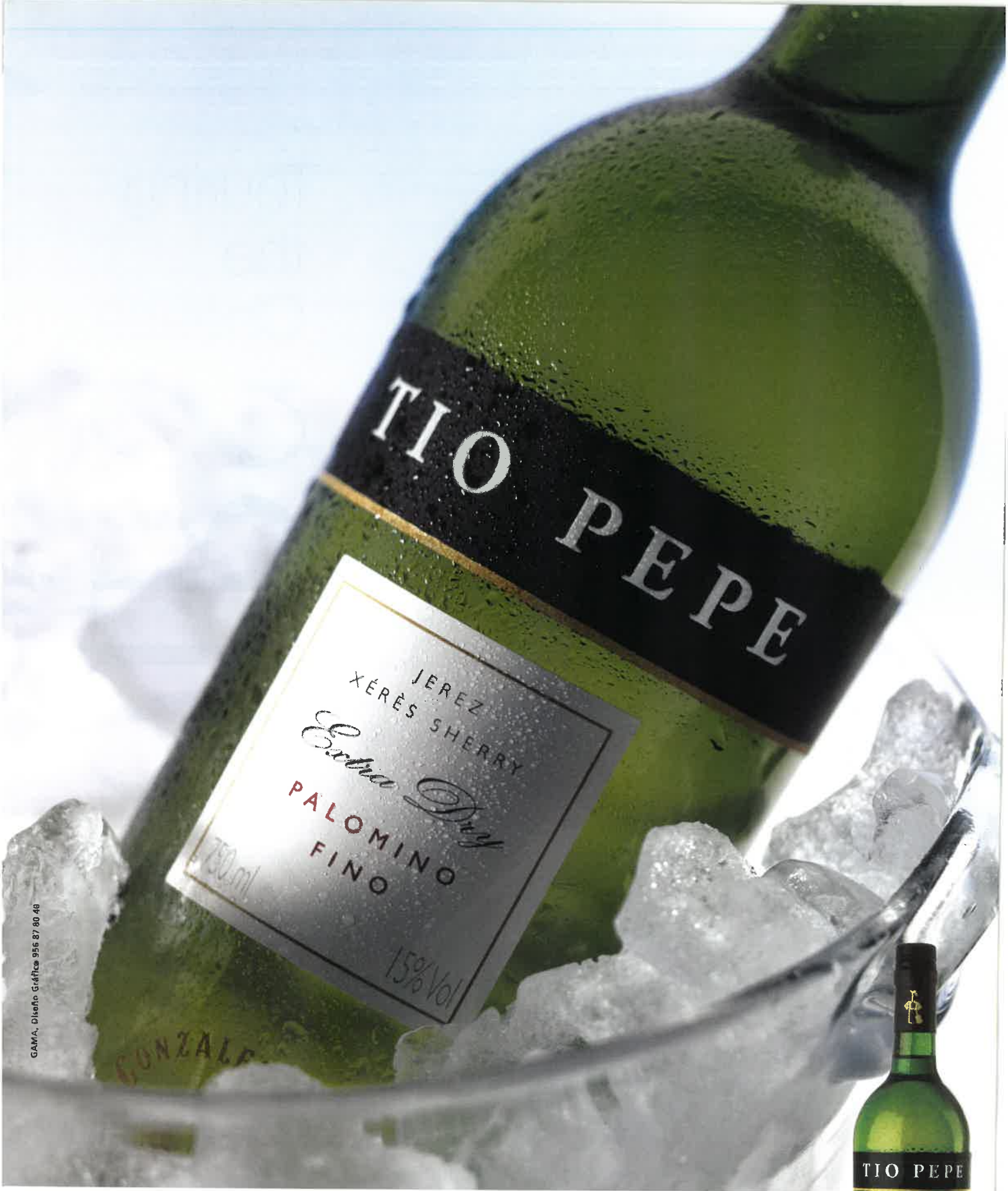

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Touring the Cheese TERROIRS

A dream-tour of Spanish cheese *terroirs* would take you on a three-thousand-kilometer journey up mountain tracks and over sierras, to cheese fairs and dairies, large and small, but, above all, through a series of remarkable Iberian landscapes. Setting off from the Atlantic north-west, the tour would run east through damp green regions where lush cow's milk cheeses shift character as you travel from one mountain valley to the next; then across the shepherds' pastures of the Pyrenean foothills from the Basque Country to Catalonia; back inland, zig-zagging south-west across the central tableland, where native wool-sheep graze on vast wheat plains; and finally south to Andalusia, where goat's milk cheeses are made in dozens of inland village sierras. And finally, after all that, you would hop on a boat to the Canarian and Balearic island terroirs. These local cheesemaking traditions, old and new, owe their strength of character to geographic contrasts—and, alongside that, to the varied imprint of the human hand. Individualism and imagination, chance and accident have played a vital role in shaping the character of the Spanish terroirs. Here we tell the story of their emergence in the last forty years.

Monte Enebro

TEXT
VICKY HAYWARD

Spanish cheesemaking first came to international attention two thousand years ago when Strabo, the Greek geographer, wrote about the herds of super-sized native milk-cattle which were said to have grazed close to the port of Cádiz, Andalusia's oldest city. Strabo noted that he thought the origin of these mythically giant cattle was "the richness of the grazing pastures," adding "the grass they graze is dry, but it fattens a lot...." and commenting of the milk, "in effect, it is so fatty that to obtain cheese it has to be mixed with much water...."

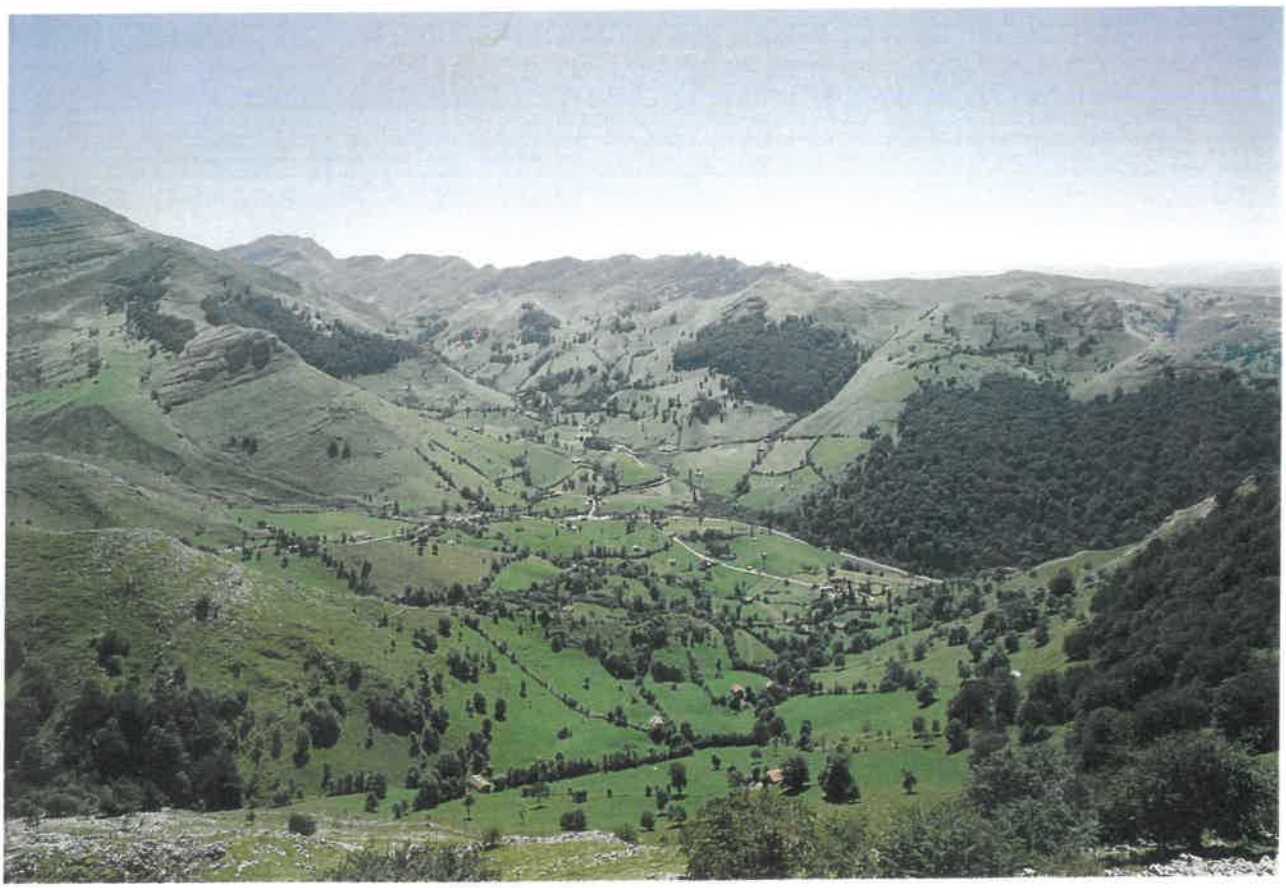
Strabo's sharp eye for agricultural detail strikes a modern note. Native livestock, grazing pasture and dairying technique are the basic building-blocks of what we now call terroir. Yet until recently the diversity of such cheese terroirs in Spain was taken for granted on home-ground. Only when looked at in the modern European context did it become clear that Spain was home to a series of cheeses that were distinct, highly original and largely unknown to the outside world.

A Bundle of Local Units

English 19th-century diarist Richard Ford famously described Spain as "a bundle of local units tied together by a rope of sand." And so it was with cheese. In a land criss-crossed by mountain barriers rather than roads or railways until well into the 20th century, only the sturdy sheep's milk truckles from La Mancha and Navarre traveled regularly outside their region of origin.

Other cheeses were eaten where they were produced, within a series of local worlds underpinned by centuries-old systems of land-tenure and grazing rights.These still exist. From east to west and from south to north, the Spanish pastures range from Menorca's sea-salty meadows to the Canary Islands' threadbare vegetation, from the Andalusian sierras' flora to the Pyrenees' highland grasses. Famously, Spain's sheep still trek around worn drovers' roads marked out in medieval times although these days, less romantically, transhumance (*Spain Gourmetour* Nº 54) is often by train, with the sheep traveling outside the rush-hour on cut-price group tickets. Cows and goats, too, migrate seasonally between lowland and mountain areas, as they have done for centuries, but usually along shorter provincial paths.

Local cheesemaking techniques were often born of isolated ingenuity. Wild thistle-thread rennet, *cuajo de cardo*, which dates back to Greek and Roman cheesemaking methods, remains a characteristic ingredient in sierras where the spores of the blue thistle still hang in the air close to the shepherds' and goatherds' pens. The Picos de Europa mountains' blue cheeses are thought to have come about after a lump of cheese was accidentally left in a cave and rediscovered months later riddled with blue veining produced by the penicillin in the cave's chalky damp air. Northern wood-smoked cheeses—Basque Idiazábal, Asturian Gamonedo, Galician San Simón and Cantabrian Quesuco, for example—started life in caves and refuges where the shepherds lived in summer, lighting fires at night (*Spain Gourmetour* Nº 57). The flavor of the smoke, which also helped preserve

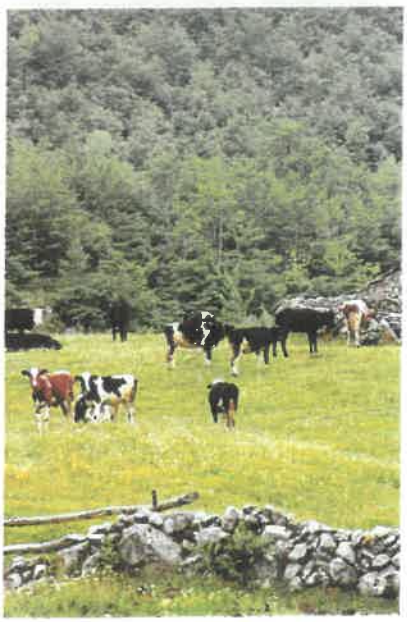


the cheeses, has now become absorbed into their character. The tradition of maturing sheep's milk Zamorano originated in underground medieval wine bodegas where the cheeses were kept cool until the late summer agricultural fairs. Likewise, Spanish cheeses' characteristic shapes have emerged from the everyday materials to hand: wicker, wood, ceramics, palm leaves, cheesecloths, egg baskets and the woven esparto grass once tightly coiled into molds for Manchego cheese.

The geography that created this diversity also meant that most of the cheeses—whether mountain or lowland, made with ewe's or goat's or cow's milk or a mix of all three, whether shaped by hand into baby nuggets or drained in molds into large wheels—remained unknown outside the area where they were produced.

Cheese Maestros

"I thought it was a shame these cheeses might be lost," says Ismael Díaz Yubero. In the late 1960s, when he was a young vet working at the



Ministry of Agriculture, he dreamed up the idea of cataloguing them. His boss gave him the green light and he traveled around the cheese terroirs by rail, road and on foot. Sometimes he slept in the shepherds' pens to get up at first light and watch the cheesemaking. Equally important, he wrote up these methods in internationally recognized terms established by FAO. The result, the *Catálogo de quesos españoles,* was published in 1969 at a time when pasteurized fresh white cheese, pseudo-Edam and pseudo-Manchego were sweeping the board in Spanish city shops.

"My idea was that a greater awareness of these cheeses could stimulate the agricultural economy," says Díaz Yubero, an award-winning consultant on nutritional, food and gastronomic issues.

The 1969 catalog remains a fascinating record thirty-five years later: twelve of the 33 cheeses are now well-known names, a couple have been industrialized and others—such as Asturian Beyos, Andalusian Pedroches and Galician Arzúa-Ulloa—are just beginning to be recognized.

From left to right: Enric Canut, Ismael Díaz Yubero, Miguel Ángel Vázquez de Prada and Luis Herrero: household names in Spanish cheese circles

Díaz Yubero's catalog set the agenda for a vast body of work. Progress was slow but steady. Manuel Arroyo, a Santander-based dairy chemist, explored the Cantabrian mountains by mule and distinguished Cabrales, Picón and Valdeón, the three blue cheeses made there. In 1978 a young cheesemaker called Enric Canut drove up and down the hills and mountains of Catalonia in a hand-cranked Citroën, documenting thirty makers of the region's seven traditional cheeses. "All but three large cooperatives were illegal for one reason or another," he remembers. In 1981 Zacarías Puente, a Cantabrian restaurateur, hosted the country's first farmhouse cheese fair in his hotel in Laredo. In 1985 Trujillo, in Extremadura, followed suit with a fair of regional sheep's and goat's milk cheeses.

A Cheeselovers' Calendar

Specialized regional cheese fairs offer the chance to meet producers and sample the same cheese in different makers' hands. Here are a dozen of the best.

JANUARY

La Foz (Asturies) *Certamen del Queso Afuega'l Pitu.* (mid-Jan; Sun). This competition for producers, now in its 23rd year, is a good opportunity to get to know a rare fresh cheese. www.morcin.com

MARCH

Arzúa (Galicia) *Festa do Queixo.* (Mar; first Sun). A longstanding cheese fiesta, nearly 30 years old, with producers offering tastings and cheeses for sale.

APRIL

Valdepeñas (Castile-La Mancha) *Gran Selección de Queso Manchego.* (mid-Apr). Regional government competition for the year's best DO Manchegos. No tastings, but they can be organized for professionals. www.jccm.es

MAY

Fuerteventura (Canary Islands) *Concurso Nacional de Queso de Cabra.* (Apr-May). A national competition open to goat's milk cheesemakers from right around Spain, held at Fuerteventura's annual agricultural fair. www.cabildofuer.es/portal_queso

Granada (Andalusia) *Feria del Queso y de la Cabra (FICADE).* (mid-May.) A new fair dedicated to southern goat's milk products, especially cheeses. www.fermasa.org

Trujillo (Extremadura) *Feria Nacional del Queso de Trujillo.* (1st May). Now in its 18th year, this bustling Mayday fair specializes in the region's sheep's milk cheeses, both tortas and mature hard cheeses. www.feriadelqueso.com

JUNE

La Palma (Canary Islands) *Feria Ganadera San Antonio del Monte.* (mid-Jun). A traditional cattle market in Garafia where La Palma's goat's-milk cheesemakers compete—and you can taste their cheeses. Tel: (+34) 922 417 060 and 922 400 029

AUGUST

Arenas de Cabrales (Asturies) *Certamen del Queso de Cabrales.* (Aug, first Sun). For blue-cheese lovers, a competition that is now 32 years old with five prize categories, plus lots of tastings. www.quesocabrales.org

Pesquera (Cantabria) *Feria Internacional del Queso Artesano.* (mid-Aug). Farmhouse cheese fair with makers from right around the region. www.ayuntamientodepesquera.com

OCTOBER

Cangas de Onís (Asturies) *Concurso-Exposición de Quesos.* (12th Oct). Founded in 1940, this fair has a wide selection of the Picos de Europa's cheeses to taste. Producers of Gamonedo, Beyos and Cabrales compete for prizes. www.cangasdeonis.com

La Seo de Urgell, Catalonia *Feria de Sant Ermengo.* (mid-Oct). Some three dozen Pyrenean cheesemakers from both sides of the border meet at this annual fair. www.laseu.org

DECEMBER

Villafranca de Ordizia (Basque Country) *Mercado de Ordizia.* (Dec; first week). A famed traditional pre-Christmas cheese market at which Idiazábal cheesemakers of all kinds sell their product. In September the town holds a renowned competition for Latxa sheep's milk cheeses. The winning cheese is auctioned off for huge sums—for example, in 2002, for 4,200 euros. (the money goes to charity). www.ordizia.org

Arzúa-Ulloa Beyos Cabrales Gamonedo Garrotxa

By 1990 the Ministry of Agriculture decided it was necessary to update its catalog of cheeses. This time around 81 different types were included, most named by the place where they were made. Another six years later, when the *Spanish Inventory of Traditional Products* was published, over ninety cheese terroirs were identified.

Old Territories

The next question was how to preserve the character and quality of these cheeses. In the case of the few emblematic names, such as Navarrese Roncal or Castilian Manchego, the Spanish *denominación de origen* (DO) system—now Protected Designation of Origin—offered a ready-made framework (Glossary page 123). Since it raised the question of terroir it also switched the limelight back to Strabo's building-blocks—pasture, breed and cheesemaking.

What do they mean on the ground? Santiago Altares, secretary of Manchego DO, explains what pasture means in the case of La Mancha's dryland grazing. "There is *barbecho,* or fallow pasture, in spring, then, in summer, comes *rastrojo,* or wheat stubble, which contains the remains of the grain and chaff. In some areas the flocks move to summer uplands where they graze on Mediterranean scrub. Then, in the autumn, after the first rain, the new shoots grow through *rizia,* or barley stubble. In November come the *bellotas,* or holm-oak acorns, which are like chocolates or toffees for the sheep—they literally run after them, from tree to tree." It is this high-fiber dryland grazing, supplemented by cereal feed, which gives the fatty milk noted by Strabo. What, then, distinguishes smaller pockets of terroir within large areas of broadly similar grazing in central and southern Spain? This is where the question of native breed comes in. "Breed can be compared to grape variety in wine-making," says Enric Canut. Thus, the milk for Manchego comes from Manchega sheep, for Zamorano from Churra and Castellana sheep, for La Serena from Merino sheep, for Torta de Casar from Entrefino and Merino sheep, for Oropesa from Talaverena sheep—and so on. Likewise, among Spain's milk goats, there are Murciano-Granadina, Retinta, Verata, Serrana, Majorero and Palmero, to name just a few (*Spain Gourmetour* N° 51). In more scientific terms, breed determines not only the yield of milk but also its chemical characteristics such as protein levels.

Then comes the human element—or, in other words, local cheesemaking technique. The most famous example in our own time is probably that of thistle-rennet sheep's-milk *torta* cheeses from westerly Extremadura. These were traditionally sold locally as fully cured hard cheeses, sometimes mellowed in olive oil. But occasionally, when the shepherds made them from very fatty spring milk, proteolithic bacteria would appear, turning the cheeses into a gooey cream within their rind. "Until twenty years ago the shepherds' families would eat the tortas at home," says Francisco Murillo Sánchez, technical director of La Serena DO. "They were seen as a mistake. Then tastes changed and local bars and restaurants began to sell them." The rest is history. Today the torta makers know exactly how

Ibérico Ibores Idiazábal La Serena Majorero

to balance and encourage the proteolithic bacteria, and the cheeses have spread from La Serena and Torta de Casar DOs to the Tierra de Barros (Extremadura), Toledo (Castile-La Mancha) and Los Pedroches (Andalusia). Outside Spain, they are being hailed as one of Europe's great cheeses.

New Terroirs

During the 1980s, a new generation of Spanish cheesemakers emerged. Some were livestock-farmers hoping to escape the fluctuations of milk prices. Others were city-dwellers looking for a new way of life. Like olive oil and wine producers they seized the possibilities offered by new chilled stainless-steel equipment. They also had the luck to have maestros on hand—Enric Canut, Manuel Arroyo and others who made cheesemaking classes available for the first time since medieval times, when the monks shared their knowledge.

"We used to think a good cheese was made by the moon and the makers' hands. Now everyone knows about micro-organisms," says Isidro Fernández Jiménez, a biologist who has been teaching cheesemakers around Extremadura and Andalusia since the 1980s. "We moved from the sheep-pen to the dairy, from wooden to plastic molds, and from guesswork to precise measurement of temperature and acidity."

Some of the new generation chose to develop new cheeses. Montsec, for example, dates back to 1978, when a group of city-dwellers began to make raw-milk goat's cheese coated in wood-ash, using the milk of their cooperatively owned Murcian goats grazing in Lérida province (*Spain Gourmetour* N° 5). Garrotxa, originally from Gerona province, was inspired by an extinct local goat's-milk cheese, as recreated by Canut and chemist-turned-farmer Ramón Badía, but today it is made from pasteurized milk and incorporates the grey mold that bloomed on the skin of trial cheeses. Canut also devised Queso de Murcia al Vino, a goat's milk cheese washed in red wine, while teaching in Murcia. "We needed to lower the acidity of the curds so we tried washing them with herb infusions and then with local red wine. Finally we decided to soak

WEB SITES

www.mapya.es/alimentacion/pags/Denominacion/consulta.asp
You can look up all the cheeses covered by any Designation of Origin on this Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food site. Under each DO heading, information is given about product characteristics, manufacturing method, geographical provenance, historical and/or environmental links, and Regulatory Council details and web pages. (Spanish)

www.quesos.com
This specialized web site devoted to Spanish cheeses provides information about cheese-producing areas, the most important cheeses, a cheese-finding facility using various criteria, cheese and wine matches, accessories, recipes and Internet sales service. (English, Spanish)

the whole cheeses in wine." Montsec and Garrotxa are now considered modern classics while Queso de Murcia al Vino has DO status.
Some of these terroirs are one-man creations. Rafael Báez makes Monte Enebro, a roll of semi-cured white cheese in a penicillium mold, in the Valle del Tiétar 50 km (32 miles) south-west of Madrid. He started a dairy there in 1982 at the age of 64, after studying cheesemaking with Enric Canut and Ramón Badía. "I'd tried goat-farming but I decided to concentrate on making the cheese and to buy in the milk. That was enough—I was still up at 5am!" He buys milk from the valley's goatherds. This sets the limits on production. Today he and his daughter make just over 100 tons of his international prizewinning cheese, exporting it around Europe and to the United States.
Even newer are the organic terroirs. Miguel Ángel and Isabel Guerrero make sheep's milk cheeses in a valley close to the Navarrese Sierra de Urbasa with the milk from their own herd of 200 Latxa sheep. Four years ago, ten years after they set up the dairy, they switched to organic making. "The summer mountain pastures are organic, but since most lowland pastures are fertilized, we lease double the area of unfertilized winter grazing," explains Miguel Angel. The decision to go organic has added 15-20% to the cost of the final cheese, but even so the cheeses fly out of their hands at farmers' markets.
These organic terroirs, still in bud, look set to multiply fast. In 1999 there were just 16 organic dairying businesses in Spain. Two years later—the latest statistics—there were 37 of them. And interest is now

moving on to a larger scale. One denomination cheesemaking area with naturally fertilizer-free pastures, Ibores, in Extremadura, is paying for research trials to back up producers who decide to go organic.

Taking the Cheese to Market

"There was a certain point," comments Enric Canut, "when learning to make cheese was not a challenge any more. But learning to sell it was."

Every Spanish cheese-lover has their story of going to buy cheese at first light in a cattle-market or a far-flung farmhouse in the 1970s. Picturesque, perhaps, but not always so good for the cheesemakers, especially the most far-flung ones, or for the cheeses themselves, which were not always at their best by the time they reached the table. Thirty years later, things are changing. Today each Spaniard eats ten kilos of cheese a year, double the amount consumed twenty years ago, and production of goat's and sheep's milk cheeses—unlimited by European quotas—is rising steadily. Cheeses are also being exported as never before. In 2002, for example, exports of cheese—other than processed or grated—leapt to over 28,000 tons, 35% up on the previous year.

Collaborative ventures have played an important role in this process. In Asturies, for example, Crivecar, a cheesemakers' cooperative, which set up shop in the regional capital, Oviedo, in the late 1980s, now has three shops under its wing. At the same time the Consorcio de Quesos Tradicionales de España, set up in 1987 by Mariano Sanz, began the

Manchego

Murcia al vino

Pedroches

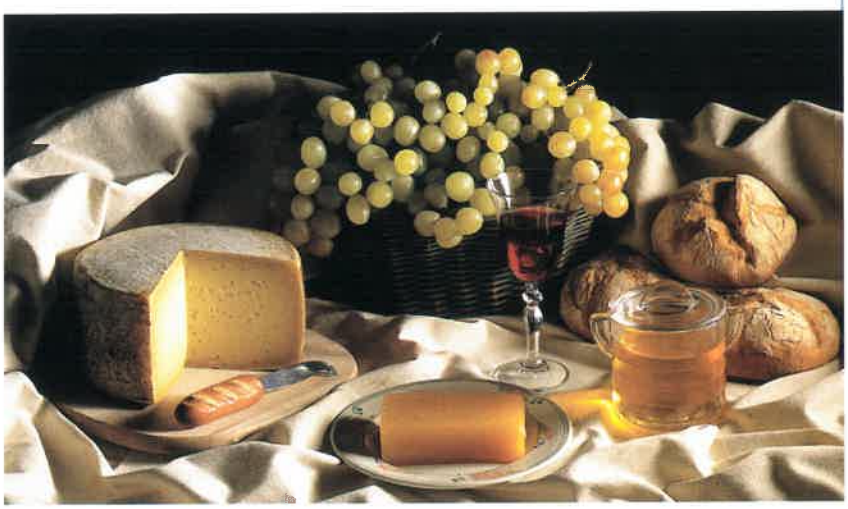
Picón-Bejes

Quesuco de Liébana

Roncal

THE TASTE OF A KISS

"Uvas con queso saben a beso." Grapes with cheese taste like a kiss. So runs the Castilian proverb, usually quoted when a bunch of sweet white grapes is served alongside cheese—maybe sheep's-milk Zamorano or Manchego, or maybe milder cow's-milk Galician Tetilla or Aragonese Tronchón. But there are other matches to try too. For if the genius of Italian cheeses is in cooked dishes, and French ones in their ability to combine on a cheeseplate at the end of a meal, Spanish ones seem to be made for grazing all day, and casually playing off against their natural partners—say, cut into triangles and served with lightly toasted almonds or mild black olives scattered on the same plate. Then there are dried fruit preserves: most famously, rusty orange *membrillo,* or quince paste, and Mediterranean pressed dried fig cake, sometimes studded with whole almonds, but there is also the less well-known date cake, *pan de dátiles,* from Elche, or *orejones,* dried peach "ears" from Aragón. In Murcia fresh white cheeses are served raw and sprinkled with sweet *pimentón* (ground red pepper) and coarse sea salt, or fried in a spurt of olive oil. Galicia's soft cheeses like Cebreiro and Arzúa-Ulloa are delicious just as they come, eaten with hunks of local solid dark rye or yellow cornbread and sometimes with honey. For Asturian and Cantabrian blue cheeses alcoholic partners work well: dry sparkling cider is unbeatable with a tapa of Cabrales cheese, and on *Picón's* home ground it is served with *tostadillo de Liébana,* or Moscatel-based sweet wine. Finally, there are the chef's combinations. One of the simplest is Andoni Aduriz's plate of five Idiazábal farmhouse cheeses served with their rind. Or there are recipes, like those Rafael Medina has been developing to serve at the Trujillo Parador during its annual cheese fair (see p. 100).

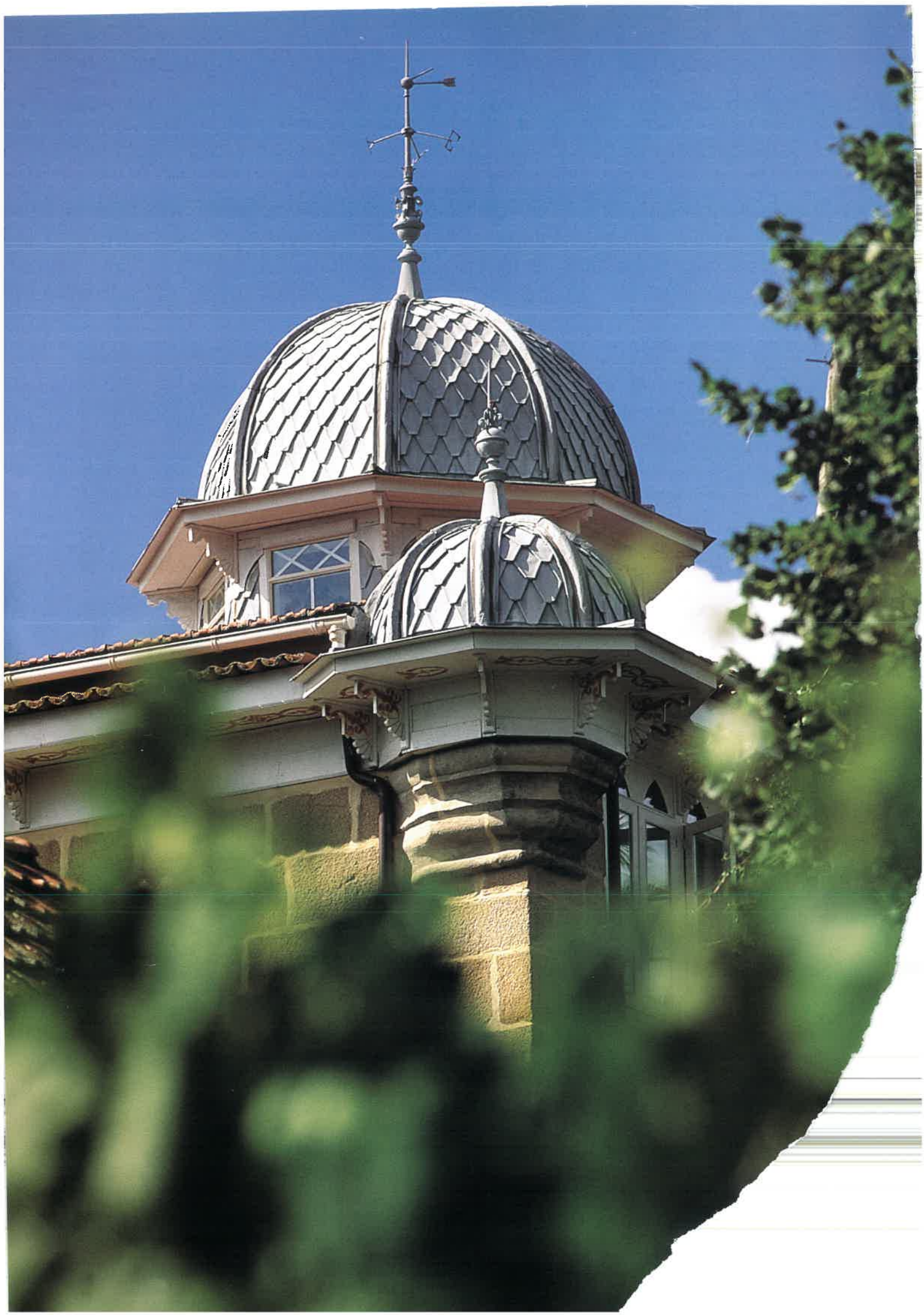


LIFE IN THE LAND OF 100 CHEESES

Enric Canut's childhood in the Catalan mountains never hinted that he would be bitten by the cheese bug. But from the age of 21, after spending six months learning how to make farmhouse Gouda in Holland, he never looked back. Ever since, he has spent his life looking for Spanish cheeses, writing about them, selling them, teaching people how to make them, promoting them and campaigning to have farmhouse-cheesemaking put on a stable long-term legal basis. His books—*Els formatges a Catalunya* (Cheeses in Catalonia), published in 1978, *Manual de Quesos, Queseros y Quesómanos* (Manual of Cheeses, Cheesemakers and Cheeselovers), which appeared in 1990, and *Los cien quesos españoles* (The Hundred Spanish Cheeses), from 1996—are standard works. But, in his own eyes, his hands-on work is just as important.

One such project aimed at building awareness of unknown as well as established cheeses is 'España, El País de Los 100 Quesos', a special section at Barcelona's biennial food fair, Alimentaria. It gives allcomers the chance to try a hundred well-presented different cheeses from right around the country. For the next edition of Alimentaria, to be held in March 2004, Canut promises surprises—among them, new native cooking ideas.

Palmero



Galicia. A view of VINEYARDS

Bodegas & Hotels

Part 3

This corner of Galicia is as green as Ireland. But rather than fields and meadows, the landscape here is one vast expanse of vineyards which stretch down the terraced hillsides to the River Miño and its tributaries below. This is Ribeiro country, home to Galicia's oldest wine, an export to half of Europe as early as the 16th century. It is also home to the wines of El Condado, a sub-zone of DO Rías Baixas, which extends inland along the Miño. In this part of Spain plots of land tend to be tiny, and the wineries, too, are generally small, while the landscapes are vast and punctuated by large stone buildings and monuments. Galician granite acquires its own special patina over time, and this beautiful stone is the other dominant feature of the local landscape. In monasteries, *pazos, hórreos, cruceiros,* and even vine supports, it is a constant presence along our route as, inevitably, is wine. The wine is mostly white and, in the case of Ribeiro, has developed in the last decade infinitely more than in its previous thousand years of history, native grape varieties on the point of extinction having been reinstated in the process. This appropriate conjunction of wine and stone rounds off our series on bodegas with accommodation. We visit Viña Meín, Pazo de Almuiña and Casa Grande La Almuiña: three bodegas where there's always a room with a (vineyard) view.

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The traditional wooden plates for octopus Galician style, *pulpo a feira* and the *empanada*, Galician pie

A quick rethink is called for. Vigo airport is fogbound, so our plane has to land in Santiago de Compostela instead. It's mid-July, the sun is blazing and it's very hot, but this is Galicia and the weather can be capricious even in summer. Never mind. We simply change the route for our rental car and instead of approaching Ribeiro from the west, drive down from the north, traveling through peaceful areas of deepest rural Galicia where, but for the occasional harvesting farm worker, there is hardy a soul to be seen. We have almost reached our first destination when we come upon Carballino. To those in the know, Carballino means octopus, and as we've been longing for lunch for quite a while, there's no question of driving on. *Pulpo a feira* (which means 'festival-style octopus' in Gallego) is a classic dish in Galicia. Oddly enough, it is reputedly eaten at its best in the inland province of Orense, more specifically in Carballino. The town holds its annual *Fiesta del Pulpo* (Octopus Festival) on the second Sunday in August—this year was its 42nd—regularly attracting up to 50,000 octopus enthusiasts. The festival is held in the 32 hectare / 80 acre, tree-shaded municipal park, where *pulpeiros* and *pulpeiras* (most of the cooks are women) boil up octopus in giant copper pans to just the right degree of tenderness—the flesh has to be slightly al dente. Still warm and cut up into chunks, it is served on traditional thick wooden plates and dressed with olive oil, a little sweet or hot *pimentón* (a type of paprika from Spain) and a good sprinkling of salt. Any outdoor fair or *romería* (festive pilgrimage) worth the title in Galicia will have a pulpeiro on hand, which suggests that there must be plenty of them about: a huge number of festive events go on in Galicia, which has more traditional festivals than any other part of Spain, itself a country with an above-average number. In their book about Galicia's gastronomic festivals, entitled *Festas gastronómicas de Galicia*, Mariano García and Fina Casalderrey catalog over 240, and these are only ones associated with specific foods. Pilgrimages, livestock fairs and the like (*Spain Gourmetour* N° 56) account for many, many more.

Having tucked into pulpo a feira and *pimientos de Padrón* (those tiny green peppers of which just the occasional one is explosively hot) washed down with Ribeiro wine—a very typical, or, as they say around here, *enxebre*, meal—we drive on. Approaching Leiro, the vines which have hitherto played a relatively discreet part in the landscape begin to take it over completely. We are in the *comarca* (district) of Ribeiro, in some parts of which over 75% of the cultivated land is given over to vineyards. And it's been that way for over a thousand years.

The monastic connection

Surrounded by a mountain system reaching up to over 900 m / 3,000 ft which protects it from rough weather from the South Atlantic, the comarca of Ribeiro is made up of lovely, gentle valleys through which the rivers Miño, Avia and Arnoia flow. With an ecoclimate mid-way between oceanic and Mediterranean, it is ideal for grape-growing: vines are cultivated in centuries-old, granite-built terraces against a backdrop of woodlands.

The influx of pilgrims along the Jacobean Way in the Middle Ages (*Spain Gourmetour* Nos. 53 and 54) attracted monastic communities to establish themselves here. That was a period when the monasteries were not only guardians of learning but of viniculture, too, having acquired wine-related skills to provide their own for liturgical purposes. The Monastery of San Clodio, near Leiro, was the 'mother' of Ribeiro wine, and Armenteira's monastery, in the nearby province of Pontevedra, was the equivalent for Albariño.

A book entitled *Historia de Ribadavia,* published in 1920 by Padre Eiján, historian, man of letters and native of San Clodio, notes a donation made to the monastery in 928 by Count Alvaro y Savita which included several vines among other goods. And the last will and testament of Abbot Pelayo, dated 1158, mentions the existence of vines and the inhabitants of four *casares,* or hamlets, in Meín. With such a long history behind it, it is hardly surprising that Ribeiro should be the best-known Galician wine, and not only in its home patch: a survey carried out not long ago among Spanish consumers revealed that DO Ribeiro is the best-known denomination of origin apart from Jerez and Rioja—neither of which could be said to lack historical pedigree either. Ribeiro's fine reputation even penetrated court circles: Castilian King Alfonso X, The Wise (1221–1284), referred to it as *'el bon viño d'Ourens'* (the good wine of Orense).

Its fame also spread abroad. The 15th and 16th centuries were something of a golden age for Ribeiro wine, a period when, as well as supplying a thriving domestic market, it counted Britain among its principal customers. Indeed, at a period when Spanishness ruled from Flanders to Italy, Ribeiro spread throughout Europe: in the novella of the same name, Cervantes (1547-1616) has his character *El Licenciado Vidriera* (The Graduate Vidriera) drinking Ribeiro at an inn in Genoa.

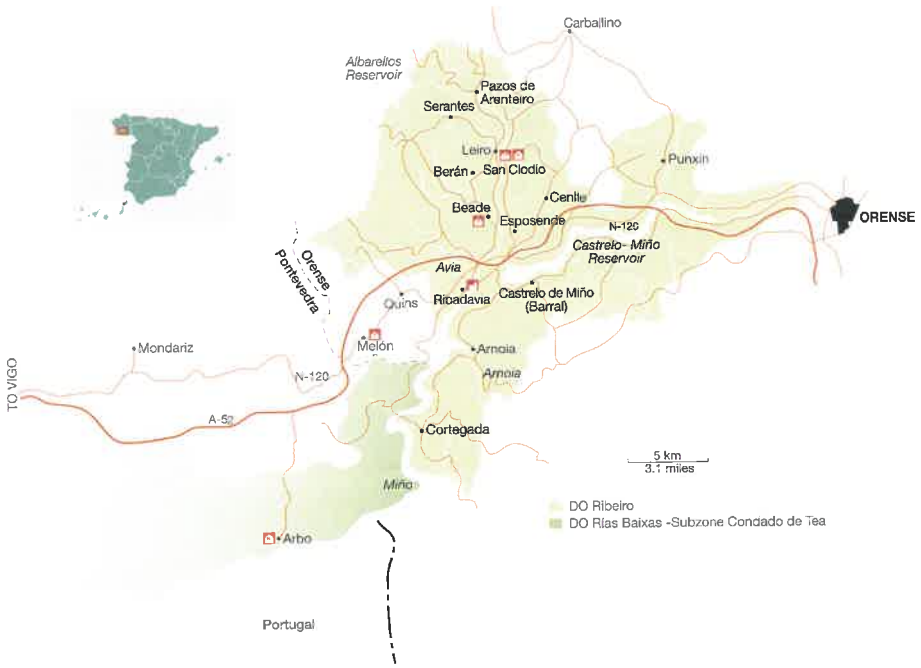
In his recently published *El vino en Galicia* (Wine in Galicia), Cristino Alvarez describes how the introduction of the Inquisition into Galicia, at around the time of the schism in the English Church triggered by Henry VIII, "put paid to that flourishing trade, along with complaints made to the king by the Gallegos themselves about the increase in the price of wine because of exports. The decline was aggravated after the independence of Portugal, to which the English turned their attention when faced with hostility from Spain."

The grapes used at that period were probably those brought in by monks from the Rhineland and France, which thrived productively once acclimatized to the new conditions. White varieties Treixadura, Torrontés, Godello, Loureira and Albariño and reds Caíño, Mencía, Soursón, Ferrón and others, were the raw material for wines—mostly whites—quite different from today's.

The 18th century saw the introduction of foreign varieties which were more productive and money-making than the traditional ones, which they gradually ousted. White Palomino—known here as Jerez—and Garnacha Tintorera took over the area definitively in the 19th century when the vineyards were decimated by phylloxera.

Viña Meín

Their reign continued until very, very recently when a few wine-makers started to reinstate traditional varieties. This, and their adoption of the latest winemaking technology, was inspired in part by the success of their neighbors in the DO Rías Baixas.
This, then, was the context in which the Viña Meín bodega was set up, just a stone's throw away from San Clodio monastery, the 'mother house'. In 1987, a group of friends—all Leiro locals—hatched a plan to make a wine just for themselves, with no commercial ambitions. It was to be a days-gone-by Ribeiro using Treixadura grapes grown in their own vineyard but with the benefit of modern technology.
They began looking around for half a hectare (1.2 acres), eventually acquiring three. The venture took off, and what began as fun evolved into a serious bodega with Javier Alén at its head. By buying bits of land here and there, they now have 14 hectares / 34 acres of vineyard—something of a record in an area where minutely fragmented land ownership patterns prevail. The fact that the 3,000 hectares / 7,400 acres currently governed by DO Ribeiro are in the hands of 5,000 growers illustrates the point.
The bodega was built adjoining a farmhouse dating from 1600: the old house was rehabilitated and the new bodega constructed in its former courtyard. The resulting complex works very well and is almost exemplary in this bodegas-with-hotel context: the rustic exterior in perfect harmony with the surroundings and comfort levels in the interior conducive to relaxation even without help from Bacchus.
The interior of the bodega, with its attractive, ultra-modern ceiling of honey-colored wood is more welcoming than these buildings usually are, despite the inevitably chilly quality imposed by the presence of stainless steel tanks. It was from here that the first Casal de Meín (vintage 1994) emerged: this predominantly Treixadura white has since made its way step by step into the pantheon of Spain's top whites, garnering prizes and accolades en route. The bodega has started to produce reds now, with Javier Alén as winemaker—constantly on the move between Madrid and San Clodio—and Ricardo Vazquez as *bodeguero* in charge of the day-to-day running of the vineyards. They are both more than satisfied with their new baby: Viña Meín tinto Clásico 2001, made with Caíño, Mencía and Ferrán grapes, and aged in wood for 18 months.
The winery's production capacity is 110,000 bottles a year. This is the modest, 'family' scale that Viña Meín has opted for, its goals being more concerned with quality and recovering wine-growing traditions than with turning itself into a big bodega. A tasting room is currently



The road to Ribadavia

Before setting off on this trip, we contacted Antonio Míguez, the bustling, efficient head of the tourist office in Ribadavia—capital of the Ribeiro comarca. He provided us with a list of not-to-be-missed places: Beade, Berán, Leiro, San Clodio… The first of his recommendations we followed was the Monastery of San Clodio, not only an important site but also, conveniently, just 2 km / 1 mile away from Viña Meín. We had seen it in passing on our way there the previous afternoon, when there was clearly something going on: the red carpet at the church door and the

people in formal clothes milling about told us it had to be a wedding. We had dinner that night at an unpretentious *tasca* (tavern) just opposite the monastery in the tiny hamlet of San Clodio. This was another `enxebre´ meal: *churrasco* (beef flank cooked on a griddle over an open fire—a specialty to be found in the hundreds of *churrasquerías* all over Galicia) and peppers, not the tiny ones this time, but smooth, green *pimientos de Arnoia* for which the neighboring town of Arnoia is locally famous. Inevitably, they have their own festival, held in early August, at which the peppers can be tasted in all possible guises, from traditionally fried to flavoring ice cream.

The following morning, all was quiet around the monastery. The origins of the foundation seem to be unclear: some date it back to the 6th century and others to 926. However, it is known to have been inhabited alternately by Benedictines and Cistercians, and to have acquired a fine reputation for wine-growing. The basilicate church with its three naves and three apses is late 12th-century Romanesque, with occasional incursions into the Gothic style. The rest of the monastery has been painstakingly restored and converted into a luxury hotel which is run by the Galician government along the lines of Spain's state-run Paradores chain. We visit two large Renaissance cloisters inside, open to non-guests: in one of them, tables are busily being prepared for another wedding reception.

Though Pazos de Arenteiro was not on Antonio's list, I had read about its fascinating history and its many *pazos* and was intrigued. The word 'pazo', which means 'palace' in Gallego, refers here to a big ancestral, usually rural, house—the equivalent of an English manor house or a French château. Happily, many very beautiful examples of pazos still survive—an inventory and sizeable bibliography have been compiled. Though there are fine pazos in some towns, they are most commonly associated with the countryside and traditionally make their own wine, almost always for

home consumption. Many still do so today, particularly in the DO Rías Baixas area, though they now make and market high quality wines. This explains why so many Albariños are labeled '*Pazo* de so-and-so'.
Pazos de Arenteiro stands on a steep slope in a landscape of vines and native woods through which the rivers Arenteiro and Avia flow. Its name is amply justified by the number of pazos—all granite built—that it contains, attesting to its importance in past centuries through its connections with the wine trade. Pazo de los Feixóo, Pazo de los Tizón, Pazo de Cumelo, Pazo de Cervela, Pazo Loxos.... Many of them are rather crumbling, and the tone of gentle decay this creates lends the place a special charm. These semi-abandoned homesteads, their gardens now run wild, are so evocative that it is easy to imagine figures from the past strolling through rose arbors, of which now only the metal framework remains, or those abandoned barrels being rolled down the steep streets to the pazo's winery....
Pazos de Arenteiro provides us with our first sighting of some very characteristic bodega doors which we find again and again in the villages we visit later. In their upper part, these wooden doors are perforated by cut-out squares, behind which is another little door which can be opened to allow air in through the holes and ventilate the bodega.
In Pazos' San Salvador church, also Romanesque, local bigwigs could buy the right to be buried, the price being paid not in money but—yes, you've guessed it—in wine. The going rate was half a *cañado* (a Galician local measure, equivalent to 37 liters) of wine a year, according to César Justel's book *'Pueblos con encanto de Galicia'*.

We retrace our steps and drive through Leiro—site of the Galician Oenological Station and of the *Fiesta de la Vendimia dRibeiro* (Ribeiro Wine Harvest Festival) in late summer. The town has riverside walks and a fine bridge, the Puente de San Clodio, over the Avia. Nearby is the little hamlet of Barzamedelle, some of whose pazos have enormous bodegas and vineyards where the terracing is up to 4 meters / 13 feet high. Also close by is Gomariz, a village with a beautiful Romanesque church, more pazos, and what is reputed to be the oldest bodega in Galicia.
The outskirts of Leiro are the heartland of Ribeiro: the countryside is occupied by thousands of vines, the river Avia and woodland. There are no big centers of population for miles, crowds are a summertime phenomenon, and even then only when one of those many fiestas is going on.

Santa María de Beade

Berán and Beade

In part, the lack of crowds is accounted for by emigration, historically to other countries and presently to the big cities. "Barely 40 years ago, Berán had a population of about ten times the 220 inhabitants it has now," laments Avelino. Avelino is a prototypical *colleteiro,* or small winemaker. He owns about a hectare (2.7 acres) of vineyard, split up into 14 or 15 plots. He has kept two plots for himself and shared out the rest among his six children (another example of the minutely fragmented land holdings mentioned earlier). A member of the DO's Regulatory Council and of the tasting board for many years, he is now retired and tends his vines with the attention of a gardener. Between red and white, he produces about 5,000 bottles of wine a year, made with the traditional varieties for which he opted over a decade ago.

Avelino escorted us around the steep, stony streets of Berán, a fine example of popular architecture but with many of its buildings abandoned. "Those people emigrated to Venezuela," he explained, indicating the 'For Sale' sign on one of them. It was Avelino, too, who explained about the bodega doors we had first noticed in Pazos.

Berán, known historically for its quality red wines, can now claim to be the Galician capital of another regional specialty—*licor café.* The recipe for this coffee liqueur could not be simpler: grape spirit (marc), sugar and coffee, sometimes given a personal touch by the addition of cinnamon or orange. It is a great local favorite, and having tasted it I quite see why. There is, of course, a Licor Café fiesta, held on 28th October.

An unbelievably picturesque little road leads from Berán towards Ribadavia, winding its way through terraced vineyards down to a little plateau. Rounding one of its hairpin bends, you suddenly come upon an imposing church which looks (forgive the hackneyed simile, but this is exactly what came to mind when I saw it) just like a ship afloat in a sea of vines. This has to be one of the loveliest vinegrowing landscapes in the whole of Spain. The church in question is Santa María de Beade, built in the 16th century on the remains, still visible in the apse, of a Romanesque predecessor, and with noticeable Renaissance and Baroque elements, belonging to the Order of Malta. Facing the church, at the end of a tree-lined avenue, are a Calvary and a small chapel, both Baroque. Evening is setting in. The workers in the vineyards are packing up and heading for home, on foot or by tractor.

Ribadavia

'Si me quieres tratar bien, dáme vino de Ribeiro, pan de trigo de Ribadavia y mozas de chan de Amoeiro' (If you want to treat me well, give me wine from Ribeiro, wheat bread from Ribadavia, and girls from Amoeiro plain) goes the popular local saying. We know for a fact that there's no lack of wine or bread, at least, on the 'bank of the Avia', which is what the name Ribadavia means. Nor is it short of fine old buildings: its Old Quarter has been officially declared of historical and artistic interest.

In the 11th century, King García I chose Ribadavia as the capital of Galicia, and though it retained the title for only six years (1065-1071), it seems that the importance of this extensive kingdom attracted an important Jewish community to settle here. The *judería,* or Jewish Quarter, occupied a large part of what is today the historic center of Ribadavia, with the Plaza de la Magdalena, where the synagogue used to be, at its center. In the course of a walk around this part of town, we also discovered its charming, trapezoid Plaza Mayor, the Romanesque church of San Juan with beautiful corbels and decorated windows and doors, and the church of Santiago, again Romanesque. The Catholic Monarchs' expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 deprived Ribadavia of the Jewish community which had played a vital role in developing its wine trade. Nevertheless, it left an enduring mark and for almost 15 years, Ribadavia has been reliving past glories in its crowd-pulling *Fiesta de la Historia.* On the last Saturday in August, everyone dresses up in period costume and plunges back

From top to bottom: Herminia and her Jewish cakes and the church of San Juan, in Ribadavia

into the Middle Ages, engaging in various medieval activities: there is a market, a Jewish wedding or *Malsín*, a tournament of knights, falconry... and even the financial transactions that day are conducted in period coinage, or *maravedíes*.
At the beginning of May for over 40 years the annual *Feria del Vino dRibeiro* (Ribeiro Wine Fair) has been bringing together everyone involved in the Ribeiro wine world. The importance of wine as a tourist attraction is obvious, and the Tourist Office has a full program of guided visits all year round under the heading *'Ribadavia con los cinco sentidos'* (Ribadavia with the five senses) which take in villages, churches, pazos and the like, interspersed with visits to the area's many fascinating bodegas.
Another year-round service is provided by Herminia Rodríguez, who gets up at four every morning to make the unique Jewish

WEB SITES

Designations of Origin

www.doriasbaixas.com
This is DO Rías Baixas' web site. It gives information about its Regulatory Council, production data, wine characteristics, tourist routes, news items, and a list of the bodegas covered by the DO. (English, Gallego, Spanish)

www.do-ribeiro.com
This is DO Ribeiro's web site, giving information about its Regulatory Council, history, wine characteristics, data about its leading bodegas and its wine festival, news items and relevant links. (Spanish)

Bodegas

www.geocities.com/bodegasrobalino
Bodegas Robaliño's web site (they are the owners of Pazo de la Almuiña), with information about the company, its wine and facilities. (Spanish)

www.casagrandelaalmuina.com
Casa Grande la Almuiña's site provides information about its history, facilities, guest rooms, services and the bodega of the same name. (English, Spanish)

Tourism

www.turgalicia.es
The Galician Regional Government's Tourist Office web site provides very complete information about accommodation, restaurants, various tourist attractions, festivals and a news section, reservations and relevant links. You can find information about the hotels featured in the article here. The virtual visit to Galicia is excellent. (English, French, Gallego, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish)

www.agalicia.com
This is the web site of Agalicia.com, a very useful tourist guide to the Autonomous Community of Galicia which provides information about accommodation of many different kinds and routes worth exploring. (English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish)

www.riasbaixas.org
The Rias Baixas' local tourist office web site is divided into two sections: a tourist guide with web links to every town and village in the area, and a magazine section featuring what's on in the locality. (English, Gallego, Spanish)

From top to bottom: the spa Balneario de Mondariz; monastery of Santa María de Melón and *hórreos* in Quins

sweetmeats and cakes which she sells in her traditional bakery or *tafona,* in calle Porta Nova. Until 1990, her old wood-fired oven used to turn out traditional cakes and bread, but that year a Ribadavia neighbor brought her a recipe book which she had been given by some Jews living in Vigo. With the backing of the local authority, Herminia began cooking the recipes, and her shop has now become a magnet for tourists in general, and particularly for Jewish visitors following the *Ruta de Sefarad,* the 'Sephardic Route' which tours the sites of Spain's former *aljamas* (Jewish quarters). "The recipes are so ancient," boasts Herminia, "that they don't even make them in Israel." She patiently recites the names of her cakes and sweets to each customer—*kamisch-broit, ma'amul, küeles demon, ghorayebah* and so on up to a dozen or more—and explains what they have in them: "that one's filled with dates, that one has poppy seeds, those are made of almonds, that's a double-baked sponge...." And in conversation she is a fount of fascinating information, such as the fact that in Israel, sponge cake is called 'spongy Spanish bread'. Herminia is quite a character.

The road to Arbo

Leaving lively Ribadavia behind, we continued southwards along the course of the river Miño towards Quins, and then on to another bodega with its own hotel.
Quins is perched above the road and has one of the best-located collections of *hórreos* in the whole of Galicia. An hórreo is a typical, and very characteristically Galician, grain store. It looks rather like a long, narrow stone dog kennel (with wooden sides and doors) raised on several legs which are topped by stone discs to prevent rodents from climbing up them and getting into the storage area. In Quins, there are close to a hundred hórreos crowded together around the threshing floors. Almost all are granite-built (there is the occasional concrete one), and most of them are still in use. Close to them stands a Calvary, similar to the one in Beade, from where one can look down on the Miño below as it makes its way into the province of Pontevedra.
Not far from Quins is the Cistercian monastery of Santa María de Melón, founded in the 12th century. The monastery—except for the church—is about to be rescued and converted into another 'hotel in a historic building', like the one at San Clodio. Meanwhile, wandering about its ruins has a certain charm. The local who described it as 'the perfect ruin' before we started exploring was absolutely right: shaded cloisters,

ancient stones now clad in vegetation, a glimpse of cypresses here, a cemetery there... It has all the romantic elements, including a lovely and quite extraordinary granite dovecote with over a thousand niches—I actually counted!—making the interior look like an enormous bottle store.
Entering Pontevedra province just beyond Melón, we made a little westward detour to visit the Balneario de Mondariz, the most important spa in this area of abundant thermal springs. From the 19th century on, the famously therapeutic waters attracted the cream of society to its very beautiful spa. Today, much of its architectural legacy has been restored, as has the whole balneotherapeutic culture, creating an important hotel and tourist center.
Our final destination was Arbo. As Carballino was synonymous with octopus, so is Arbo with the lamprey eel. But that is another story (see box page 32). Arbo took us into the territory of El Condado, one of the five sub-zones that make up the DO Rías Baixas area. On the right bank of the Miño—Portugal lies on the other side—is an undulating landscape, again occupied almost entirely by vines, where the Albariño grape reigns supreme.
Standing among the broad terraces which descend towards the Miño, Arbo's two bodegas with their own hotels are very close to each other and have very similar names: Casa Grande La Almuiña and Pazo de Almuiña.

Pazo de Almuiña

Pazo de Almuiña is a rather unusual pazo. Built in 1709, it is an almost square, two-storey building and, though less spectacular than some others, it is elegant and attractive. The whole building is orientated around a courtyard garden with a six-legged hórreo at its center. While this is curious in itself, hórreos usually being built away from the house, what makes it even more so is that this one was used for drying not grain but lamprey eels.
Its owners emigrated to the Americas in the 19th century, but before that, in around 1809, this pazo was where the inhabitants of the town gathered under the leadership of Abbot do Couto to discuss strategies for defending themselves against Napoleon's soldiers who were carrying out raids in the area (this was at the time of the Peninsular War).
The pazo subsequently fell into decay, and so it remained until its recent restoration, which also extended to the bodega, now thoroughly modernized and re-equipped.

Albariños under the Liñar de Vides label, made exclusively with his own grapes. In summer, impeccable vine arbors become shaded walkways, among which is a little outbuilding containing stills for, as is the Galician tradition, Robaliño makes aguardientes and liqueurs in addition to Albariño. Liñar de Vides' aguardiente is matured, while the liqueurs are based on ancestral recipes such as *licor de ruda* (rue liqueur) and *licor de hierbaluisa* (lemon verbena liqueur). There's licor café, too, of course.

Casa Grande la Almuiña

Just above Pazo de Almuiña is Casa Grande la Almuiña. This is another out-of-the-ordinary pazo. Built in 1675, it underwent major remodeling in the 19th century, when a high gallery, embrasures, and even a cupola were added. The end result is a spectacular building suggestive not so much of Galician vernacular architecture as of a combination of belle époque and colonial, this latter perhaps because of the impressive palm trees that flank the main facade. A tiered garden leads up to the house which from its hilltop surveys vineyards, the river Miño, and Portugal on its far bank.

Inside, everything is pristine and new. Although the bodega has been in operation for longer, Casa Grande opened its doors to the 'rural tourism' market just a few months ago. It has ten guest rooms and almost as many lounges and communal spaces distributed among its three floors. Some incorporate one of the complex's four embrasures, but the real gem is the glazed cupola, a thrilling little room with the best views in the house, and possibly in the whole comarca.
In the garden, several peacocks strut their stuff, spreading out their extravagant plumage and posing close to the little group of hórreos adjacent to the house. Just next to these is the bodega, which shares the name Casa Grande La Almuiña and where the family produces four different types of wine: Gran Almuiña (100% Albariño); Torre Almuiña (with Treixadura); Almuiña (a *vino del Condado*, namely with a minimum of 70% Albariño with Treixadura); and Casa Grande Almuiña (a red based on Mencía and Espadoira). All are made from grapes grown in their six hectares / 15 acres of vineyards, picturesquely reflected in the mighty Miño, getting ever mightier as it nears the sea.

Sonia Ortega *is a journalist and has been Coordinator of* Spain Gourmetour *since its beginnings.*

Text
Shinya Tasaki

Translation
Trans Asia Inc.

Spanish WINES

Shinya Tasaki was born in Tokyo in 1958. From 1978-1980 he lived in France to develop his career as a sommelier. During this period he stayed in Spain for two months.

Back in Japan he worked at a French restaurant, later at a Japanese restaurant as a sommelier and in 1987 started working as Chef-Sommelier at the prestigious Hotel Seiyo Ginza in Tokyo.

Meanwhile, he participated in several sommelier competitions in Japan, and in 1983 won first prize in the 3rd Competition for Best Japanese Sommelier in French wines.

In 1986, 1989 and 1995 he represented Japan at the 5th, 6th and 8th Sommelier World Competition, where in 1995 he won first prize.

In 1996 he left the Hotel Seiyo Ginza to create his own office, Sentir, and is now a celebrity, participating actively in many areas such as commentator on television and radio programs, seminars, forums, etc. He also owns several restaurants and a wine salon.

Shinya Tasaki makes great efforts to train young sommeliers and organizes competitions for them. Since August 2003 he has been president of the specialized wine magazine *Vinotheque*.

Selected and Tasted by International Experts

Japan

Winery: Castell del Remei
Wine: Castell del Remei 1780, 99
DO: Costers del Segre
Type: Red wine
Elaboration: Cabernet-Sauvignon, Tempranillo, Garnacha. 12 months in barrel

Still very unknown in Japan, but little by little this particular winery is arousing people's interest in this wine region.
The wine looks relatively young with a very deep garnet color with a purplish rim. The harmony between the concentrated fruity scent and the woody notes is perfect. The aroma of liquor and compote of cassis and blackberries, violets, sweet and bitter spices like licorice root is accompanied by the toasty smell of the barrel, bitter chocolate and vanilla. The first impression is a smooth attack with a well-balanced taste. The flavors of all the components are beautifully integrated in the wine. Long, elegant aftertaste.

Matching recommendation:
Venison steak, roasted shoulder of lamb.

Winery:
Castell del Remei
Tel: (+34) 973 580 200
Fax: (+34) 973 718 312
info@castelldelremei.com
www.castelldelremei.com

Winery: Cims de Porrera
Wine: Cims de Porrera Classic, 97
DOCa: Priorato
Type: Red wine
Elaboration: Garnacha, Cariñena. 17 months in barrel

Among many excellent wines produced in this wine region, which is highly appreciated internationally, the peculiarity of this wine is the content of more than 50% Cariñena, instead of Garnacha.
Very intense garnet color with a slightly orangey hue on the rim. Powerful nose with concentrated and complex aromas. An elegant harmony is achieved between the scents of compote or jam of black cherries, spices such as cloves, black pepper and licorice root, cigar-like withered leaves, animal scents like leather, fragrance of vanilla and toasty notes from the wooden barrel. The initial taste gives the impression of richness and lavishness, developing with a full-bodied taste. There is a lingering aftertaste of well-developed sweet and bitter tannin.

Matching recommendation:
Beef cheeks braised in red wine, stewed legs of lamb.

Winery:
Cims de Porrera, S.L.
Tel/Fax: (+34) 977 828 187
cims@arrakis.es

Winery: Viña Bajoz, S. Coop.
Wine: Gran Bajoz, 98
DO: Toro
Type: Red wine
Elaboration: 100% Tinta de Toro. 12 months in barrel

This wine region used to be considered as a mass-production area for bulk trade. Nevertheless, the production of very concentrated, modern, international market-oriented wines is the recent mainstream of the region.
Deep garnet color with a rim ranging from orange to brick red indicating a certain maturity. Its complex aroma structure contains black fruit compote, dried fruits, dried flowers, balsamic scents such as withered leaves, tobacco, damp soil, mushrooms, resin, animal notes like game. Scents like black olives give more complexity, and the woody notes are integrated in the wine. A round, rich, full-bodied flavor comes first, followed by fine tannins that melt smoothly and delicately into the long-lasting aftertaste.

Matching recommendation:
Stewed tripe of beef, kid.

Winery:
Viña Bajoz, S.Coop.
Tel: (+34) 980 698 023
Fax: (+34) 980 698 020
info@vinabajoz.com
www.vinabajoz.com

Photo Credits on page 124

Which Way at the Crossroads?

Text
Andrés Proensa

Photos
Juan Manuel Sanz/ICEX

Translation
Hawys Pritchard

Having got off to a brilliant start, DO Rías Baixas is now standing back and taking stock. This wine area has been through some tricky years, an uninterrupted sequence of poor harvests having forcibly put on hold work at bodega level into creating a new profile for its famous white wines. The period when interesting new bodegas were constantly opening seems to be over, and innovation now comes in the form of new-style wines, giving Albariño a new dimension. Other wines from this part of Galicia may well follow in its wake.

RÍAS BAIXAS

Pazo de Señorans

Like the rest of Galicia, the Rías Baixas district is abundantly punctuated by *cruceiros,* tall stone crosses that mark the junctions in Galicia's labyrinthine road network. These cruceiros could also be seen as symbols along the career path of DO Rías Baixas, the relatively new Designation of Origin (Glossary page 123) which has had to make various crossroads decisions since its inception in 1987, and even before. The way this area has evolved has been characterized by a series of dichotomies leading to productive controversies over how best to raise the quality of Albariños, arguably Spain's best-known white wines. If a cruceiro were to be erected for each of these vinicultural crossroads, the landscape would be even more liberally dotted with these quintessentially Galician monuments than it already is. But Rías Baixas seems to thrive on controversy: this is an area which has had to hit the ground running, at times inventing itself as it went along. In consequence, every new initiative is analyzed, discussed, honed—in short, a source of controversy. This is basically because, by definition, any new initiative represents a departure from tradition, and when the consequences of a decision are likely to be far-reaching, a certain amount of controversy is only to be expected. However, relatively minor matters are sometimes given disproportionate importance while major decisions are sometimes taken without their likely consequences being fully weighed up. This happened in the early days of DO Rías Baixas, and even before, when, with the Designation of Origin still in gestation, it was decided to back Albariño over and above other local varieties.

In the late 1970s, native grape varieties were in dire danger of dying out in Pontevedra's coastal districts. In this rainy region of north-west Spain, a high proportion of its small growers were seduced by the convenience offered by directly productive hybrids with their built-in protection against certain diseases, and substituted them for the quality noble varieties characteristic of Galicia's wine-growing areas and unique in Spain, such as Albariño (the most prestigious one), Loureira, Caíño, Treixadura, Torrontés and others, including red varieties. Those were the days when visitors to Galicia encountered cloudy *vinos de colleteiro* (harvester's wines) of obscure origin (both as to grape variety and geographical provenance of grape and wine) and sold in unlabeled bottles. Every now and again, one could happen upon a gem of real quality Albariño, made either of that variety alone or with other grapes as well. The only labeled one was Albariño de Fefiñanes, which had been on the market since the early 20th century.

Albariño Fever

Against this backdrop emerged the figure of Santiago Ruiz, former naval machinery and insurance dealer in the port of Vigo, who on his retirement had returned to the family farm in O Rosal near the River

Miño in the south of DO Rías Baixas. There he started making wine, selling it under the idosyncratic label with its naïvely drawn map that is still in use today. Though aspirationally modest, this was a wine of superb quality, and it marked the start of a process of vineyard renewal in the local districts of Pontevedra province that would culminate eventually in Rías Baixas' acquiring Designation of Origin status.

So quickly did all this happen that the phenomenon was labeled 'Albariño fever'. Santiago Ruiz was 'discovered' by various food and wine writers who played a significant part in promoting Albariño beyond the confines of Galicia. Behind the scenes, meanwhile, Santiago Ruiz and a group of other trailblazers (Franciso Méndez, Marcelino Torres, et al) were doing their utmost to disseminate new winemaking technology ('asepsis' was the watchword bandied about by Santiago Ruiz) and, of course, to promote replacing the less noble grape varieties—then in the majority—with plantations of Albariño.

It was at this point that the career path of Rías Baixas wines encountered its first cruceiros. Choices had to be made, one between traditional methods and modernity, and another between productive grape varieties and quality ones. On the first count, the choice they made was right on the whole, and 'dairy' wineries—clean (aseptic!) and equipped with stainless steel—replaced 'farmyard' wineries (this was sometimes literally true: cows would have to be moved out of the way to get at the wine) with their old wooden butts.

On the variety question, the choice made was a good one, but it could have been better. Resurrecting the area's quality wines was achieved almost exclusively thanks to the Albariño grape, the celebrity variety among aficionados despite the fact that Rías Baixas' most famous wine at that time—Santiago Ruiz—was not made with Albariño alone.

Albariño fever sometimes went too far: any new planting was of that variety only, with the result that sizeable areas (such as the Salnés valley) became virtually monovarietal, and when the subject was broached of obtaining Designation of Origin status, there was talk of creating a DO Albariño. Indeed, negotiations to do so were already underway when someone realized that the regulations of the European Community (which Spain had not yet joined, but whose membership was judged to be imminent) did not allow a Designation of Origin to be named for a variety. Furthermore, its territorial ambit was rather difficult to define since the intention was to embrace all the Albariños produced in Galicia. This realization stalled the qualification process until Soledad Bueno (*Spain Gourmetour* N° 35) (later to become president of the Regulatory Council—a post she still occupies) was appointed to take charge of seeing it through. DO status was achieved in summer 1987.

IT'S NOT ALL ALBARIÑO

DO Rías Baixas came into being on the strength of the Albariño grape. The fact that wines made primarily from this aromatic native Galician variety became so famous provided this Designation of Origin with a vigorous kick-start. Albariño grapes account for nearly 95% of the production of the over 15,000 hectares / 37,065 acres under vine in DO Rías Baixas, and Albariño varietals are the area's most prestigious and expensive wines. But that said, Albariño is not the only fruit in DO Rías Baixas, and nor are monovarietals its wines of longest tradition. This DO's regulations also cover other native grape varieties; the authorized ones are whites Treixadura, Loureira, Torrontés, Caíño Blanco and Godello, and reds Espadeiro, Loureira Tinta, Caíño Tinto, Sousón, Mencía and Brancellao.

These varieties open up as yet unexplored, or little explored, possibilities such as making red wines (there are a mere three or four brands of red wine from this area, although red grapes account for 0.34% of production) or making varietal wines with any of the other grapes (there used to be a Treixadura varietal, but it is no longer made). White varieties have a slightly stronger presence in Albariño-based wines in which a proportion of other varieties is permitted. Two historic white wines provide an example of this type—Blanco Rosal and Condado, in which 70% of the grapes are Albariño and the remainder other authorized varieties. Though there are some examples of outstanding quality (the pioneering Santiago Ruiz of Rosal, among others), they are considered also-rans by most bodegas. This perhaps explains why there are no equivalent examples to be found in the other DO Rías Baixas sub-zones, Val do Salnés, Soutomaior and Ribeira do Ulla, despite the fact that the regulations explicitly allow for that option, qualified by the same conditions as the two mentioned above, namely that they must contain a minimum of 70% Albariño.

A name had to be invented, and what emerged was Rías Baixas, the Galician language version of Rías Bajas—the name by which the whole southern, Pontevedran, coastal area of Galicia is known. Because of Albariño fever, an opportunity to promote other grape varieties was lost; it also proved to be an obstacle to creating a good public profile for DO Rías Baixas, whose name is rather overshadowed by that of its star grape to this day. Furthermore, it was decided to make it a requirement that only wines made exclusively with Albariño would be entitled to be labeled as such. Thus, wines which included a small proportion of other varieties, sometimes less than 10% (as a rule, regulations allow a varietal wine to contain up to 15% of grapes different from the variety specified on the label), were disqualified from calling themselves Albariños, and that included Santiago Ruiz.

White Wines in Demand

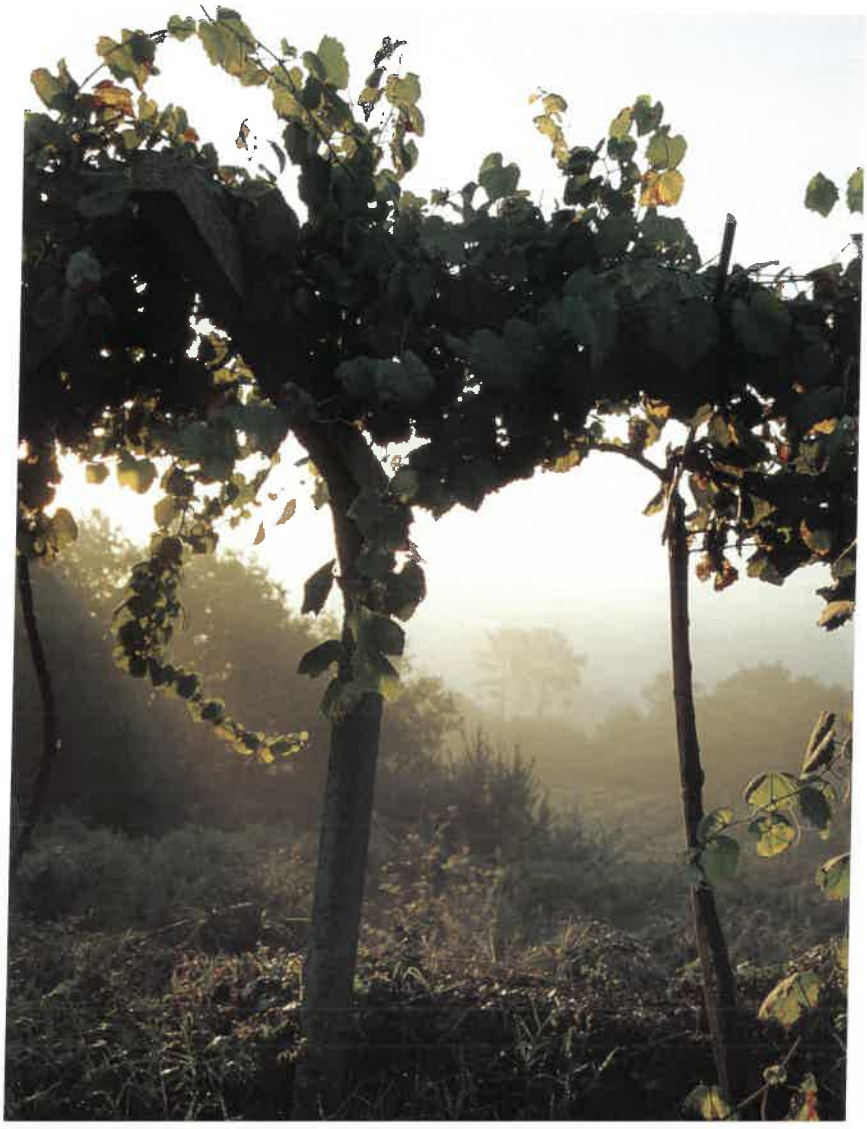
Meanwhile, the area had not been idle. Albariño had taken on considerable prestige in a very short time, ousting Ribeiro from its position as Galicia's star wine in sizeable market sectors. The effects of this buoyant behavior on the part of Albariño were various. One important one was that it served as a wake-up call for other areas, triggering structural renewal and an injection of new vitality into the old wine styles of Ribeiro and, especially, Valdeorras, which reinstated its unique Godello grape.

Another effect was that it accustomed a considerable portion of the market

to paying 800 or 1,000 pesetas (5-6 euros) for a bottle of wine, prices which would formerly have been unthinkable not just in Galicia but in Spain as a whole, especially for a white wine. Remember that this was pre-Priorato, a time when Ribera del Duero wines were only just starting to make a name for themselves and still cost less than Riojas. For Spanish consumers, the less than five euros that a Rioja reserva or a brut nature cava cost in 1985 was still a price they were only prepared to pay on special occasions; a Rueda white still cost under two euros and a big name Ribera reserva just about four.

The high prices that Albariños fetched swept away any lingering doubts, and within a few years not only did plantations of hybrids disappear almost entirely, but so too did plantations of another 'in' crop, the kiwi. Many of today's Albariño vineyards in areas such as the Salnés valley occupy plots where productive kiwi trees once grew. This was another cruceiro moment, though in this case the choice to be made was an easy one, for kiwi prices were already starting to drop (farmers were being paid per kilo what they had once been paid per fruit) while Albariño was in short supply and was considerably more profitable.

Albariños were an impressive commercial success. They brought aromas, personality and freshness to a white wine sector that was none too brilliant in Spain at that time. For Galician consumers, they also represented a top-quality, home-grown product, and they had to vie with the rest of Spain to obtain their share of a limited output. With the exception of a few bodegas, the idea of exporting, now considered almost a status qualification by DO Rías Baixas, never entered anyone's head. Wineries had to make a choice (another cruceiro along the career path), and only the canniest concerned themselves with building up a broad, stable commercial network, distributing a few bottles among many destinations, including foreign ones, especially the USA. Others opted for the convenience of the domestic market. The consequences of that have not yet been felt because, despite there being over 2,500 hectares / 16,117 acres of vineyard which produced over 13 million kilos / 14.3 tons of grapes in 2002 (closer to 17 million in 2001), there still is not enough Albariño to meet demand. Sooner or later, however, that choice will have to be paid for. There are signs in the marketplace of growing competition from top quality Galician wines: new Ribeiros, Godellos from Valdeorras, a new DO Ribeira Sacra, and Monterrei, the only part of Galicia that falls within the Duero basin, has now been resurrected as a source of exceptional wines.



Sooner Or Later?

Commercial success created a new dilemma. Traditionally, wines from this area were considered ready for drinking in the summer following the harvest, after maturing for a few months in the winery. This was something of a double-edged sword: although the maturation period gave Albariño the chance to reveal all its qualities, and buffered the effects of

even the most artisanal handling, it could also accentuate defects caused by low-tech (or even no-tech) winemaking methods.
New technology, stainless steel, chilling equipment and (oh dear!) selected yeasts brought in a new type of Albariño, many times purer and free from winemaking defects, but other, cruder ones, too, whose (mainly banana-like) aromas were untrue to the variety. At this new

crossroads, some took the route of convenience and security represented by selected yeasts, while others took the riskier path of adhering to the variety's traditional character. However, this was not a true dilemma because those who bottled all or some of their wine in the traditional manner discovered that given several months in the tank, the Albariño grape's extraordinary pedigree was capable of overcoming even the banana element.

This, then, was the next dichotomy: early or late bottling. Some Albariños hit the market in November or December, barely two months after the harvest, while others (Pazo de Barrantes) are not released until the summer. Others (Do Ferreiro Cepas Vellas, one of the area's best wines, is an outstanding example) come out later still, well after the summer. You pay your money and you take your choice, but brands which carry on bottling over several months create a problem. There can be major differences between wines of the same brand depending on bottling date, and this is an important issue which the area has yet to resolve.

Meanwhile, particular wine styles were emerging. One commercial style that became firmly established accentuated Albariño's traditional

WEB SITES

DO

www.doriasbaixas.com
DO Rías Baixas' web site gives information about the Regulatory Council, production data, wine descriptions, tourist routes, relevant news items, and a list of wineries covered by the DO. (English, Gallego, Spanish)

Bodegas

www.agrodebazansa.es
This is the web site of Bodega Agro de Bazán, home of Gran Bazan Limousin wine, and it gives information about its history, vineyards and product range. (English, Spanish)

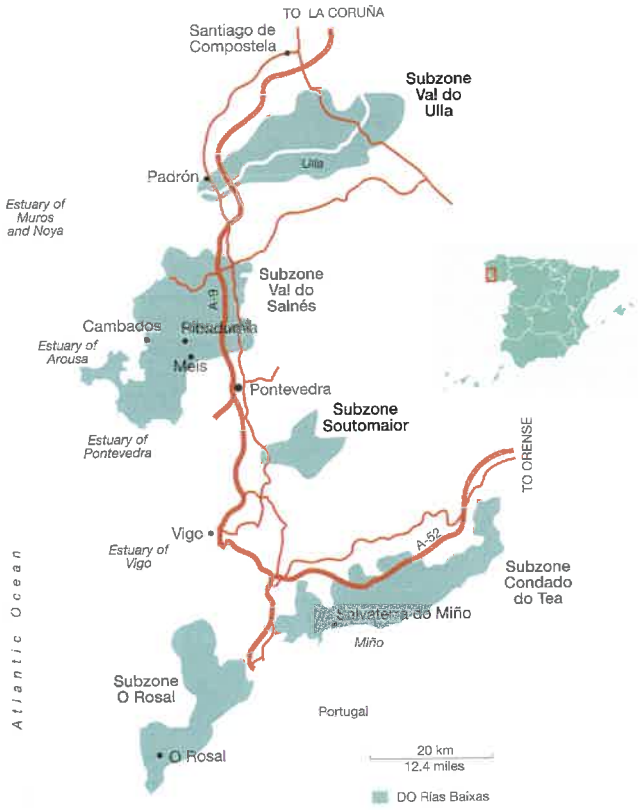
www.condesdealbarei.com
Bodegas Salnesur's web site provides a history of this winery, descriptions of harvesting and winemaking methods, tasting notes on their main, among them Condes de Albarei Carballo Galego, and awards they have won. (Spanish)

www.fillaboa.com
Bodegas Fillaboa's web site tells you about the winery, its history, and its leading aguardientes and wines, among them cask-fermented Fillaboa. (English, German, Spanish)

www.galiciano.com
This is the web site of the Galiciano group, to which Adegas Galegas belong. It provides information about this winery and its history, relevant news items, recipes, tasting notes on its wines, among them Veigadares and Don Pedro Tempo 99, and prizes they have won. (English, Spanish).

www.martincodax.com
The Martín Códax bodega's site includes information about DO Rías Baixas, the bodega and its wines, including Organistrum. (English, Gallego, Spanish)

www.terrasgauda.com
Bodega Terras Gauda's web site gives information about the winery and its vineyards, a virtual visit, news items, a glossary and tasting notes on some of its wines, including Terras Gauda Etiqueta Negra. (English, Gallego, German, Spanish)

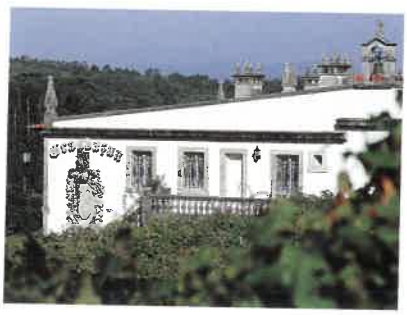


palate-friendly character derived from the high glycerine content that gives it its oiliness and low acidity in the mouth. These characteristics were accentuated in wines which were low in acidity and which also retained a few grams of residual sugars. Yet another dichotomy: on the one side, more commercial wines, some of which erred in the direction of over-sweetness (curiously, this proved to be allied to a loss of aromas—the effects of over-production in some vines becoming noticeable, only partly compensated for by the sensation of fullness that sugar produces); on the other, better wines which respect the variety's pedigree and retain the fresh acidity that is so classically Galician.

Clonal Albariños

Over-technification of the winemaking process courts the risk of losing variety-specific characteristics, but monotony is what is really causing the area concern. All local winemakers work with just the one variety—Albariño; furthermore, that variety has a very distinct personality which overrides even specific traits that a sub-zone of origin might contribute. And all the winemakers work in more or less the same way in technically kitted-out wineries. The most focused of them have been aware of the dangers from very early on and strive to extract all possible nuances from their raw material. They have certainly succeeded in registering a great many wines.

Various formulae have emerged, and of the most fundamental of these (maturation of fruit, winemaking method, various styles as regards sugar and acidity) the most significant, and certainly the most controversial, has been the involvement of wood either during winemaking or maturation, or both. The wood dispute has perhaps been the most heated of all in this lively area—it has even been suggested that wood should be prohibited in



Top: Pazo San Mauro; center: Bodegas Santiago Ruiz; bottom: Bodegas Agro de Bazán

the interests of preserving the classical purity of Albariño. In fact, making wine in wood was the classical method in this area, the wood in question being old large butts ancestrally handed down, battle-scarred and much repaired, sometimes with wood other than oak, but it was all wood. This contradiction has been repeated. In the fledgling days of DO Rías Baixas, wines made in stainless steel were accused of not being 'typical', of lacking the Albariño characteristics that Galicia knew and loved. As time went by, the same argument (regarding authenticity in Albariños) was deployed against the use of oak vessels. There are even examples of self-contradiction, with vocal opponents of the use of the cask on the grounds that it threatened the historic essence of Albariño later to be heard applauding a new departure into sparkling wines. This initiative echoed Portuguese neighbors DOC Vinho Verde's acceptance in 1999 of sparkling wine made by the traditional method of secondary fermentation in the bottle among the types of wine it regulates.

The use of casks that meet modern standards, namely casks of new, high-quality oak, was ushered in by Gran Bazán Limousin, a wine vinified in stainless steel and cask-aged. Pepe Rodríguez (now at Adegas Galegas) and peripatetic winemaker José Hidalgo can be credited with bringing in fermentation in the cask with their Terras Gauda Etiqueta Negra. Later came Organistrum from Bodegas Martín Códax, in which only the malolactic fermentation process takes place in the cask, and a long list of Albariños 'with wood', some of them notably successful, such as Veigadares and the exceptional Tempo (both from Adegas Galegas), some vintages of Condes de Albarei Carballo Galego, which uses native oak, 1583 Albariño de Fefiñanes, and the recent cask-fermented Fillaboa.

Cask ageing at Adegas Galegas

Pazo de Barrantes

Long Live Albariños!

With wood becoming increasingly accepted as vintages go by, a whole new concept began to take shape—Albariños for laying down. Monovarietal Albariños and those involving other grapes have demonstrated that they age beautifully in the bottle. Though not designed for such treatment, wines tasted after five or more years in the bottle have been found to be superb. So here we have yet another crossroad, a new and interesting choice to be made between wines for early drinking and wines with good ageing potential.

There are pros and cons to the fact that the wines of Rías Baixas, especially Albariños, have always been categorized as young wines on the Spanish market. A high proportion of consumers think that non-*crianza* wines must be drunk in the year following their vintage date, and that they deteriorate from then on. This perception has its drawbacks, and some winemakers are starting to combat it.

One aspect is that consumers eagerly await the arrival of new vintage wines, rejecting as 'too old' wines which will probably have matured well in the bottle. This creates difficulties for Albariño winemakers who bottle late: they see other brands' new wines arriving when their own from the previous harvest have only just reached the shelves. On the other hand, when harvests are less productive, wine that appears in the marketplace early has a very brief presence there, as happened around the turn of this century.

The period when interesting new bodegas were constantly opening seems to be over, and innovation now comes in the form of new style wines. Most of these are in the same vein: wines intended for a long life—good developers for drinking two, three or more years after their vintage date.

Whether these are young or matured for varying periods in casks or larger containers; fermented in stainless steel tanks or in wooden casks or vats; refined in the bottle or in the tank; whether their structure derives from maceration with the skins before fermentation or from lees stirring (the latest 'in' technique in Rías Baixas), they are all made with the common aim of extending their useful life—hitherto sadly limited to one year—and extracting new nuances from the Albariño grape. Albariño has provided ample evidence that it is a variety with ageing potential, with or without wood. Some of the greatest Albariños are enhanced by ageing in the bottle. Wines which reach the marketplace within the year, some bottled early (like Lusco and Santiago Ruíz), others late (like Pazo de Barrantes and Do Ferreiro Cepas Vellas), improve after a year, two or even more in the bottle. In a way, these wines are designed to last: their bone dryness and lively acidity, which can be a little harsh in callow youth, round out after a spell of bottle ageing.

Many other, more conventional, wines also age well, however, and there is also a new line of wines specifically designed to be laid down. This heading covers most of the wines in which wood is involved and wines now starting to be released when already several years old. One example is Pazo de Señoráns Selección de Añada, a market presence for the last five years, which is released after three years in the tank, the first of these in contact with the fine lees. It is not cask-aged at all, but the winery plans to launch its first cask-fermented wine in Spring 2004. One exciting recent discovery is a wine in which wood plays an important role: Tempo, from Adegas Galegas, is cask-fermented then matured in the tank for 13 months, followed by another seven months in the bottle. This is something of an exception given that bottle-ageing facilities are not yet common in the bodegas of Rías Baixas.

In essence, these are DO Rías Baixas' two major challenges: diversification of wine styles and longevity. For once, there is no dispute about what the goals are, though there is about how to achieve them. As different approaches are explored and each winery makes its own choice, the discussion becomes ever richer, opening up the wide range of possibilities by no means exhaustively covered in this article. Also in the equation is research at vineyard level (plots, yields, crops and training systems: espaliers are being abandoned for a return to the

Ripe Albariño grapes

Maceration with the skins at Terras Gauda

Vineyards of Pazo de Barrantes

traditional arbor system) and the untapped potential represented by varieties other than the limelight-hogging Albariño.
As a result, with more abundant harvests giving bodegas the leeway to divert certain amounts of wine into exploring new directions, we await the appearance of new, more complex and elegant wines. The more advanced bodegas are already pushing back the horizon both spatially (Rías Baixas producers are looking to the world's great white-producing areas, like Burgundy and, especially, Alsace and the Rhine for their inspiration), and temporally, with long-haul wines which are, significantly, the ones which made those areas famous.

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GASTRONOMY: WINE OF THE SEA

Albariño acquired the sobriquet *el vino del mar* (the wine of the sea) not only because its producing zones all lie near Galicia's Atlantic coast, but also because it goes so perfectly with the area's most traditional cuisine. This is marine cuisine, based on superb shellfish obtained from the Rías Bajas and fish either caught off the coast itself or landed at its big fishing ports. The sobriquet, equally applicable to wines from Condado de Tea and O Rosal, could also extend to red wines. These are a good alternative to whites with stronger-flavored foods which are often difficult to match, and, for example, with *lamprea* (lamprey eel), which is caught as it swims upriver and cooked in the Bordeaux style (with its own blood and red wine), and *pulpo a la gallega,* boiled octopus dressed with *pimentón* (type of paprika from Spain) and olive oil in the traditional Galician way.

The different styles of wine currently being developed allow this rather generic relationship between Rías Baixas wines and seafood to be fine-tuned. The fruity and floral aromas of young whites combine perfectly with the marine fragrance of raw oysters and clams: this is especially true of the driest, freshest wines, which provide a nice counterbalance to the seafood's saline notes. These drier wines are perhaps the most readily matchable with a wide range of foods, including oily fish, such as turbot and the wonderful sardines caught in Galicia's estuaries. Wines with more glycerine and a touch of sweetness are best matched with foods which have their own element of sweetness, such as crustaceans (prawns and shrimps) and scallops.
Less straightforward seafood such as goose barnacles, with their deeply iodized flavor, and larger crustaceans such as spider crab and lobster, need greater complexity from the wines they are matched with. This is where wines fermented or aged in the cask come into their own, especially if the ageing process has been rounded off with a period in the bottle to give them greater subtlety. Wines of this kind are also excellent with cooked fish dishes, such as seafood rices and even with some lighter meat dishes such as roast fowl and cold meat.

In the early 1950s, the farmers of Calanda, the small Aragonese town where film-maker Luis Buñuel was brought up, tried a suitably surreal experiment. They tied paper bags over ripening peaches to protect them from pesky fruit flies and summer hail-storms. Their peaches came out of the bag not only unblemished, but also with heightened flavor and aroma, and a lightly downy, evenly golden skin. In the following decades Calanda's peach orchards grew and so, too, did the farmers' pride in their fruit—heavy in the hand, aromatic to sniff, and with a satisfying flavor of balanced fruit sugars and acids. In 1999, nearly fifty years after the first bag was tied on a peach, the originality and quality of the Calanda crop was recognized by Designation of Origin (Glossary page 123) status. Now, for the first time, four years later, the farmers are growing enough peaches to sell them abroad. Do not be fooled by their luscious appearance—for their quality and flavor is forged against the odds by farmers who dedicate their lives to a hand-crafted agricultural system shaped by trial and experience, observation and learning, plus a certain wacky experimental spirit. Invisible as this may be, it lies behind every peach.

Golden Peach Country

CALANDA

TEXT
VICKY HAYWARD

"Calanda," wrote film-maker Luis Buñuel of the town where he was brought up, "where each day was so like the next that they seemed to have been ordered for all eternity, was a large village in the province of Teruel with fewer than five thousand inhabitants...." Today, Calanda is a small town and it sits in the center of the peach country, its orchards dotted over a desert-like basin south of the River Ebro. Buñuel remembered the earth here, "fertile, but dry and dusty" and the olive trees. There were no peach orchards then—the trees grew only in a casual way, often in unpruned clumps on the banks between olive groves until the 1950s. And despite their local fame for size and flavor—or perhaps because of it—the peaches rarely left the region. Most were eaten fresh, and the rest were sun-dried on cane mats and preserved in a red wine syrup for eating during the frostbitten winters to come.

For the growing climate here is not a generous one. This is an area of scanty rainfall averaging some 350 mm (13.8 inches) a year and the orchards are etched out from buff and brown drylands thanks to centuries of collective work building complex irrigation systems. The weather, swinging from the icy winters to scorching summers, is the architect of

the long ripening cycle that forges the peaches' flavor, but it also brings with it hazards which can destroy the crop in just one or two hours.

The secret of Calanda's peaches, then, lies in the growers' skill in turning a severe but beautiful terrain and harsh climate to their advantage.

Handcrafted Orchards

The paper bags flutter all summer long on the peach trees. Each tree requires between three and six hundred bags, which translates, at a rough calculation based on the current growing area, into a total of 200 million bags in 2003.

The baggers, called *embolsadores,* set to work from June onwards, once the fruit's pit has hardened, stretching up into the tree, working from the ground or wooden ladders with splayed legs. The translucent bags, which filter the light, are purpose-made: they are lightly waxed on the outside to resist dampness and reflect the sun's rays, and finely perforated at their base to allow the ripening fruit to breathe. Each peach is wrapped loosely in a bag, which is folded over the fruit-bearing branch and stapled to fasten it. At lunchtime the baggers—the peach-grower's family, friends, and piece-workers—retreat from the heat. As the sun drops they start again. By the end of a nine-hour day each person will have bagged up to 4,000 fruit. Some say, skeptically, that the record for a day stands at 6,000 peaches.

This is not the only labor-intensive handwork during the course of a year. Apart from irrigation, plowing, winter pruning by hand to shape the trees, spring fertilizing, summer scything to keep down grass and weeds and a second pruning (also by hand) of the new green shoots, there is the *aclareo,* or thinning, of the young peaches in May. This is an old practice, which

was used by the famous Montreuil peach growers who supplied Louis XIV. It began seriously here in the 1970s and today, the growers pull off up to 70% of the young walnut-sized fruits by hand, leaving only the very best candidates for final ripening on the tree.

Then, in mid-September, after nearly five months of ripening, the harvest starts. The pickers go out early in the day, when the dew has dried on the orchards, working up and down the long lines of trees, returning to each tree four or even five times over the six weeks that follow, to ensure each peach is perfectly tree-ripened, glinting gold through its paper bag. Loaded into boxes, then trucks, the fruit remains bagged until it reaches the warehouse, where the paper is dampened, and the fruit is unwrapped, cleaned, graded by size and packed in numbered single-layer

PRESERVES & PÂTISSERIE

Although nearly all Calanda's peaches are eaten fresh—99.9% to be exact—a few are reserved for making old-fashioned preserves, which are enjoying a comeback these days. Not so surprising, really, given their gourmet qualities which in this case, are due to the peaches' very firm flesh even when ripe, making them a perfect ingredient for preserves and *pâtisserie.* The best known Aragonese speciality is *melocotón con vino,* or peaches preserved in ruby-colored red-wine syrup. Made here with the whole fruit, it comes out of the jar satisfyingly unflabby and macerated peach kernels lend it a twist of flavor. Two small-scale family companies, Marchenica (estcelma@arrakis.es) and Conservas Calanda (conservas@terra.es), also preserve whole peaches in a plain light sugar syrup and sell sticky dried peach strips, called *orejones,* or, literally big ears. Conservas Calanda have also adapted a Pyrenean recipe for orejones preserved in red or white wine syrup—a wicked treat directly spooned out of the jar with a big blob of crème fraîche on the top. A newer local speciality is the peach pâtisserie made by Enrique Clavería of Albalate del Arzobispo. He uses buttery shortcrust pastry for *tartaletas,* or baby tartlets filled with *crème pâtissière* and fresh sliced peaches, and flaky pastry for a large *brazo de gitano de frutas,* an oblong tart baked with apple slices on top of the egg custard and finished off with spectacular domed peach halves brushed with a neutral gelatin glaze to stop them from discoloring. The contrast between the sweet custard and the fresh, slightly tart peaches is delicious.

COMING SOON ... THE INTEGRATED PEACH

In modern times, Calanda's bagging method has revealed another virtue. The fruit grows untouched by pesticides, making it, in one farmer's words, "semi-organic for lack of a better name". But at Puig Moreno, near Alcañiz, growers at the Cooperativa San Miguel have gone further than that, switching to certified integrated cultivation at the suggestion of Spanish supermarket buyers. The project began with a few volunteer growers in 2000. "It works this way," explains one of them, Victoria Civera Vicente, aged 47, who farms a 7-hectare (17.3 acres) plot of peach trees with her family. "Until you bring in your field-book, with weekly notes of the fertilizers or pesticides used, the pruning and so on, you cannot bring in the fruit." Pheromone-based insect traps and fertilization at critical moments with nutrients indicated by soil analysis are two main strategies the growers have learned to use in order to lower pesticide residues to 50% of EU maximum limits and cut fertilizer use by a third. "We've opted to involve the growers as much as possible in implementing the new techniques," explains Oscar Baquero Martínez, the cooperative's technical director, who has overseen the switch of methods and given the growers vital backup on an everyday basis. This year will see the cooperative's first entirely integrated peach crop—over three million kilos (3,307 tons) of fruit—produced by all seventy members after they decided to switch following the success of the volunteers. Their crop will rise in volume by 50% over the coming four years—and it seems likely that integrated growing will take off elsewhere in the growing area too.

trays carrying the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) seal of authenticity. Work goes on night and day, seven days a week. Even El Pilar, the 12th of October, the region's most important religious festival, goes by the board to ensure the peach harvest comes safely home.

Native Identity

What, then, makes Calanda's peaches so different? "Botanically speaking, they are late ripening yellow-fleshed peaches with a small brown pit—as opposed to American peaches' crimson pit," explains Mario Magallón Calvo, technical director of the PDO's Regulatory Council. Eating-wise, they are satisfyingly big, each weighing just under half a pound, or 200 g, and they are also very firm and very sweet, averaging 15 Brix degrees of sugar (although sometimes this soars to 22-25 degrees), which is balanced by plenty of malic and citric acids. This combination is the heart of the matter. They are good to look at and, unusually, equally good to eat.
Where does this combination come from? The answer lies, in part, in the long growing history *in situ*, probably since Roman times, when Calanda was a stopping-off point on the highway between Zaragoza and Córdoba. Later, when the Muslims farmed for four centuries here, they built webs of irrigation dams and ditches, called *azudes* and *acequias*, to channel the water from the Ebro's north-flowing tributaries—the Rivers Martín, Guadalope, Guadalopillo and Matarraña—into the market gardens close to towns such as Calanda, Albalate del Arzobispo and Alcañiz, which was later nicknamed

"the Garden of Aragon". The community rights to this pure sierra water, shared out in *adores,* or bi-weekly time-cycles, were left intact after the Christian Reconquest in the 12th century. The link through the centuries to today's system is so direct that original elements such as the Arab dams and water-courses are still in use here.

The reputation of Calanda's peaches can be traced back under the old-fashioned name *durazno or duraznilla,* meaning cling-peach. "The duraznilla of Calanda and other villages of Lower Aragon is unique in the world," wrote Dionisio Pérez, who traveled around Spain to map its regional produce in his 1929 *Guía del Buen Comer Español* (Guide to Good Spanish Eating). Over a century before, historian Ignacio de Asso had sung their praises, especially those from Almozara, a historic area of Albalate del Arzobispo's market-gardens, in his 1798 *Historia de la Economía Política de Aragón* (History of the Political Economy of Aragon). These were, he said, "most esteemed for their delicate taste and great size, which regularly reaches the weight of nine or ten ounces", so had clearly taken on their main varietal characteristics by that time. Jumping back in time again, Luis Llobera de Avila, Charles V's doctor, author of *El Banquete de Nobles Caballeros* (The Banquet of Noble Gentlemen, 1530) also set duraznos apart from other peaches, which he called *priscos*—still their Aragonese name today. "Duraznos," he wrote, "are of cold complexion in the second degree, and something less those which are very ripe … they are friends of the stomach; they help the appetite …."

The Bag Factor

Then came the serendipitous bagging experiment, apparently inspired by news of Alicante's farmers ripening grapes inside paper bags (*Spain Gourmetour* N° 37). It was to cause a small revolution in Calanda's eternally ordered days. "You could see the difference straight away," remembers Valentín Caldú Rocafull, aged 73, one of the first generation of baggers in Calanda. "The bagged peaches were less hairy, with no insect bites. And they were so sweet! So we tore up olive trees and planted peaches. At the beginning, we tied on each bag with string. It was a lot of work. We did it all with our families, with mules and manure."

Vital Statistics: A Calanda Peach

Size: Minimum circumference 68 mm (0.27 in). **Color:** Golden yellow. **Sweetness:** 12 degrees Brix minimum. **Firmness:** 3.5-5 kg (7.7 lb-11 lb) resistance to pressure per 0.5 square cm (0.08 square in.). **Season:** mid-Sept to early Nov. **Quality categories:** Extra and I.

In modern terms the bag set up a private microclimate for each peach: by protecting it from wind and direct sun as well as insects, it gave the fruit smooth yellow skin and evenly ripened flesh, and, by further slowing down the ripening cycle, it concentrated the sugars and acids. And it also left it untouched by pesticides, although nobody put much store by that back in the 1950s.

All these qualities, old and new, came into play when agricultural engineer Jesús Romero Salt began rationalizing Calanda's peach cultivars in the late 1970s. "Many farmers planted from peachpits in the 1950s so the trees had not reproduced true to type. We had to sort through literally hundreds of different cultivars growing in the orchards." His team, organized by the Aragonese regional government, picked forty as the best of the bunch; eleven were planted in trials at the local agricultural research station; and, from these, three were developed as virus-free clones—Jesca, Evaisa and Calante—to offer phased ripening during the six-week harvest.

As the peaches' fame grew, Calanda's orchards spread to cover nearly 3,000 hectares (7,413 acres). But profits from such a labor-intensive crop were low, even with the growers' families doing so much of the work, and the orchards began to shrink again. "We needed to identify our peaches in the marketplace," explains Manuel Borráz Ariño, a Calanda grower who runs a specialist warehouse selling his and 32 other farmers' fruit around Spain. "People are happy to pay twice the normal price for a Calanda peach. But we had to be able to guarantee its authenticity."

Supported by the regional government, the Calanda farmers gathered themselves together as a growers' association, then as a regional quality label and finally, in 1999, as a Designation of Origin. This year 670 farmers grew 4.5 million kilos (4.9 tons) of fruit—and there is more to come as old orchards are registered and new ones are planted.

High-Tech Terrains

Strikingly, many of today's orchards are in the hands of young growers who, like the previous generation, are continuing to innovate and hone the perfection of their crop.

"I often come back from inspections surprised by the conversation," says Mario Magallón Calvo, the PDO's technical director. "You realize the growers need to be botanists, biologists and mechanics, to understand the weather and business."

Take Javier Tello Caldú, aged 37, who designed a combined drip irrigation and anti-frost system in his 12-hectare (29.6 acres) orchard in Calanda. The latter, a network of showerheads suspended above the trees, is activated by computer-programmed thermometers when the temperature drops below freezing. As the shower's droplets liberate heat, so the temperature around the fruit rises, preventing it from freezing and withering on the tree. The system, which cost around 6,000 euros per hectare, also calls Javier on his cell phone, so he can drive down to the orchard and check all is well. "The system may be activated only one night a year, but that can save the crop," he comments.

Other innovations to combat the cold snaps here include diesel-fired heaters backed up by windmills, which blow hot air out over the groves on frosty nights; awnings that are rolled out to protect ripe summer fruit from taking a pummeling during hail storms; and insurance, which is expensive.

Irrigation is perhaps the greatest area of change. "A drip system is a big initial outlay," says Luis Ros Arpal, aged 31, who converted his parents' 21-hectare (51.9 acres) farm in Caspe, close to the River Ebro, to drip irrigation. "But the trees gain so much from receiving a little water every day." Not only this, a drip system generally cuts water consumption by 40% and Luis reckons his system has also cut fertilizer consumption by 75%. At La Herradura, an abandoned village on the banks of the Ebro where he and 19 friends have planted a 1,250-hectare (3,089 acres) fruit farm, the

WEB SITES

www.melocotondecalanda.com
Web site of the Protected Designation of Origin Melocotón de Calanda. The site includes information about the PDO's Regulatory Council, its regulations and the geographical area encompassed, the history and characteristics of the Calanda peach, fruit control and labeling procedures and the companies registered with the Council. (Spanish)

farm's heart is, quite literally, a vast pump sucking water from a dam in the river at 80 meters (262.5 feet) depth to ensure water quality and supply for years to come. State-of-the-art technology is also becoming important in the large hangar-like sheds where the peaches are sorted. As the fruit moves along purpose-designed conveyor belts, it is screened by multi-angle digital cameras which detect blemishes and variations of color and shape, allowing precise selection before the fruit is packed into numbered boxes with the PDO seal of authenticity, chilled and sent out to its final destination by truck within 24 hours of picking.

Striking The Balance

But for all the innovations, this remains a distinctively handcrafted crop—and it is clear that this is the essence of the fruit's character. "You need a special receptivity to pick, mark and pack fruit," says José Millán Sangüesa, president of Cooperativa San Miguel, which has all the latest technology fitted in its warehouse. "The firmness of the peaches helps them but the handwork will always be vital." Most of the orchards, too, remain handcrafted. Over half the peach plots are still one hectare or less in size. Parents, siblings, aunts and uncles help out throughout the year, even in the larger innovative orchards, like those of Javier and Luis. In Albalate del Arzobispo, for example, Francisco Bernard Trulleque, aged 39, grows peaches in a ten-hectare (25 acres) orchard helped by his father and uncle, Paco and Pepe, aged 70 and 78. The rest of the family helps out, too, in the busiest times, when ten or fifteen pairs of hands are needed. Francisco has made some changes: the shoots and grass from pruning and mowing are now dug back into the soil to raise its organic matter, a new area of orchard has been planted, organic figs from another area of the farm are now being picked, and the area under the trees is kept clean of grass and weeds. But his father and uncle remain a vital part of the team. "I'd say their knowledge and experience counts in 90% of the work," says Francisco. "They can second-guess the weather. They know every inch of the orchards inside out and back to front. They know each tree." For them this is clearly a labor of love. Pepe, for example, goes into the orchards every day. But, I ask, is it really necessary? "Oh yes," says Pepe, waving his pruning clippers. "You know, sometimes I'd swear the trees know you are there." Who knows, he may be right.

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See Recipes page 89, Exporters page 114 and Photo Credits page 124

How to Eat STANDING UP

Tasting Tapas in Bilbao Part 3

On 15 June, 1300, a little seafaring town was granted the charter and privilege of self-government by Don Diego López V, Lord of Vizcaya. Over seven centuries later, Bilbao is a modern city still busy celebrating its 700th anniversary.

Bilbao is a developing city in all senses, and its once predominantly industrial economy is increasingly becoming service-based. Whereas just a few years ago tourists were few and far between here, they are now a common sight, ranging in style from important-looking men who stay at the grand hotels to kids with backpacks and not much money but a lot of know-how discovering a city with a lot to offer. And that includes local food.

Text
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Translation
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Photos
Fernando Madariaga/ICEX

Bacalao al pil-pil

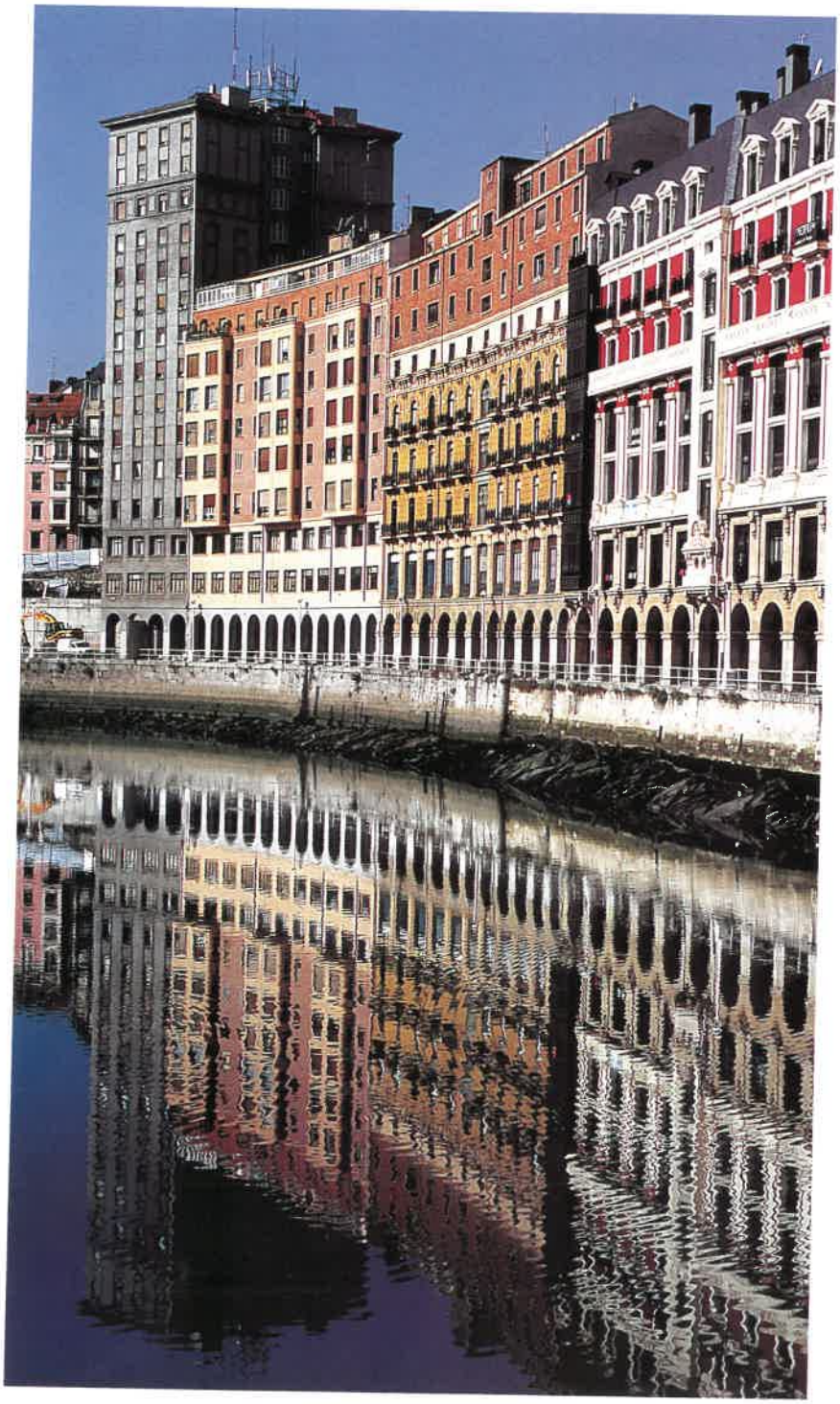
(Pil-pil style salt-cod)

Salt-cod is Bilbao's star product so, unsurprisingly, it features as an ingredient in a huge range of tapas. For this dish, it is cooked in olive oil with garlic which emulsify with the gelatin in the fish skin to create a thick sauce. Locals love it.

Try it at: **Baste, El Globo, Víctor Montes, Gatz, El Victor, Xukela**

Evidence of Bilbao's urban renewal is everywhere: it has a new metro, designed by Norman Foster; a big conference center, the Palacio Euskalduna, on the site of the old shipyards; modern streeetcars; and the mouth of the river Nervión, known here as the *ría,* has been reclaimed and transformed into a focal part of 21st-century Bilbao. Both river banks have been turned into popular walkways, much used by skaters, cyclists, walkers, runners, jugglers, and ordinary passers-by. Twelve bridges span the ría between San Antón and El Abra: the one nearest the sea, the iron Puente Colgante (suspension bridge)—celebrated as *'elegante'* in a well-known local song—standing like a triumphal arch at the end of the sequence. These bridges link parts of the city which formerly lived parallel but separate lives: thanks to architect Santiago Calatrava's new Zubi-Zuri bridge, the quiet residential district of Campo Volantín is now just five minutes away from Bilbao's big main thoroughfare, the Gran Vía. Then there's the unmissable Guggenheim Museum (*Spain Gourmetour* N° 47) whose success has exceeded all expectations and placed Bilbao firmly on the circuit of world cities to be visited. Add to this the locals' love of music and their passionate approach to good food and wine—famously traditional but increasingly open to new ideas—and you have some idea of the appeal of modern-day Bilbao.

Bilbao is the capital of Vizcaya, one of the Basque Country's three constituent provinces (the others are Alava and Guipúzcoa). Basque food is among the most recognized and



respected in Spain, and Vizcayan cuisine's particular contribution to its overall reputation is largely based on its ways with *bacalao* (salt-cod). Bacalao provides the basis of many of this area's top dishes, such as *bacalao a la vizcaína* (Vizcayan-style salt-cod, namely in a sauce made with dried red *choricero* peppers, rehydrated and peeled); *bacalao al pil pil* (salt-cod cooked with olive oil and garlic in an earthenware dish which is constantly nudged about during cooking so that the fish releases juices that emulsify with the oil to give a rich sauce); and *bacalao al Club Ranero* (salt-cod cooked in a sauce combining pil pil and *pisto,* a ratatouille-like vegetable medley). *Pisto a la bilbaína* (the vegetable medley with the addition of beaten egg) is another local classic, as its name suggests. Teamed with *canutillos rellenos de crema* (pastry horns filled with confectioner's custard), any of the above would be a typical meal in a local restaurant. Local menus also offer an enormous variety of fish and seafood, such as *chipirones en su tinta* (baby squid in their own ink), *cocochas* (cheek pieces) of cod or hake, sea bream and tuna in season... Meat is equally well represented—from the sturdy *chuletón* (veal chop) to roast flank and stewed ox cheek—in all restaurants and *asadores* (the Basque Country is full of these 'roasteries', where most of the cooking is done on a griddle over an open fire). Bilbao's new image has attracted many visitors, and the impression that they take away with them is of an innovative, modern city whose people have welcoming ways and a culture all their own. This includes local gastronomy which is, indeed,

very characteristic, not least in its adoption of new takes on deep-rooted traditions.
While burgeoning tourism and media attention have spread the Basque Country's creative gastronomy well beyond its frontiers in the last few years, food has always played a very important part in Basque life where, for centuries, its function has been as much a social as a physiological one.

Pintxos

The generic word for *tapas* in Bilbao is *pintxos*. Strictly speaking, a pintxo is food speared on a stick but, by extension, the term has come to mean any of the *cazuelitas* (tiny earthenware dishes of cooked food), *banderillas* (pickles on a cocktail stick) and other more sophisticated little morsels that make up the local bar food repertoire. While all these modalities have their own peculiarities and background lore, what they have in common is that they are food to be eaten standing up. The art of this sort of eating in Spain is that it provides the best of both worlds: it dispenses with the formalities of sit-down-knife-and-fork conventions without sacrificing good company and conversation. Indeed, providing an opportunity for chat is one of its main points.
Bilbaínos could be said to fall into two broad categories (with plenty of in-betweens): devotees of the traditional pintxo and others prepared to give more modern approaches a whirl. The traditionalists disapprove of the 'haute cuisine in miniature' approach to pintxos (*Spain Gourmetour* N° 55) on the grounds that, however small they may be, their content and quality should not be such as to impinge too much upon the conversation. This brings us to the parallel concept of the *txikiteo*, the custom of going from bar to bar drinking *txikitos*. A txikito is actually a little thick-bottomed glass in which bars used to serve wine; though now rarely seen as such, their legacy lives on in the language meaning a small tot of wine. Here again, the point of the txikiteo outing is to have a good time in agreeable company. The txikitos and accompanying pintxos are components of the whole event and while they might merit mention to the extent of comments on their respective simplicity, roundness, elegance and the like, they should not dominate the proceedings any more than any individual member of the group should. Bear in mind that there is a rather stoical element to pintxo culture: the ritual's aesthetic

Croquetas

(Croquettes)

Also known as *fritos,* these are made of bechamel sauce into which chopped hard-boiled egg and cured ham, salt-cod or spinach are mixed. This is then made into little balls which are dipped in flour, egg and breadcrumbs, and fried.

Try them at: **Estoril, Víctor Montes, El Globo, Mugarra**

RECHARGING BATTERIES

Tortillas variadas

(Assorted omelets)

Beaten egg combined to order with slow-fried potato, cheese, spinach, cured ham or tuna. Several of these ingredients can also be combined to give what is known as a *tortilla paisana* (country-style omelet).

Try them at: **Metro Moyua, Mugarra, Ziripot, Estoril, Gredos, Víctor Montes**

For a Bilbaíno, going out for *pintxos* means a lot more than just going out to eat or drink. It means seeing friends, running into them by chance without the need to fix things up beforehand. I'm from Bilbao, and although I've lived in New York for the past 13 years, I visit my parents and siblings back home whenever I can. Every time I go back to Bilbao, the first thing I do—even before unpacking my bags—is go out and do the bar circuit so familiar to me from my student days in Deusto, secure in the knowledge that I'll bump into lots of old friends. The therapeutic effect is instant. I prefer to meet my friends in the usual haunts rather than explore new ones where there might be more elaborate, modern *pintxos*—how could they possibly be better than my lifelong favorites? Between 1.30 and 2.30 pm, before going home for lunch, I start my pilgrimage at La Masía, where the tiny fried green peppers are still outstandingly good. Esteban, the adorable barman whom I've known since he started work there as a young lad, remembers what I like even though 20 long years have gone by since I was a regular hereabouts. I go on to Los Leones, just a few yards away, where they still serve the best *tortilla de patata* (Spanish omelet) and *caldo* (broth) in Bilbao. Caldo is a Bilbao winter classic: at Los Leones they add a few drops of dry sherry to it, and the taste and smell transport me back to my youth. I meet friends that I saw on my last visit here, but also some that I haven't seen for many years. I also go to Globo, where my friend Luis Aranduy, who was a schoolmate of mine, makes spectacular pintxos. In the evenings, before going home for dinner, I do the rounds with my brothers and sisters. It's a different circuit this time, starting close to home at Mesón de Pedro (they've recently changed the name to Mesón Markina, but the locals will take a long time to get used to that after decades of calling it Mesón de Pedro). They do marvelous miniature Iberico ham sandwiches there, and Pedro doesn't even have to ask what we want: he pours a *marianito* (red vermouth and soda) for my sister Marga and our usual *zuritos* (mini beers) for Manu, Angel and me. All's well with the world!

La Masía: Colón de Larreategui, 48. Tel: (+34) 944 249 035
Los Leones: Maximo Aguirre, 12. Tel: (+34) 944 413 029
El Globo: Diputación, 8. Tel: (+34) 944 154 221
Meson de Pedro (aka Markina): Henao, 31. Tel: (+34) 944 249 719

Teresa Barrenechea *is owner and leading light of Marichu restaurant in New York, close to the UN headquarters. She is also the author of* The Basque Table. *Her next book,* The Cuisines of Spain, *is about to be published.*

calls for a certain indifference to food which, although delicious and beautifully prepared, is eaten standing up and in very small quantities. The Spanish have a good verb for this sort of eating—*'picar'* (to peck).

Pintxo eaters in the other category are considerably less stoical and devote as much attention to the food as to the social element, seeking out pintxos of the artistic miniature type in which certain bars specialize. But both categories of enthusiast require a pintxo to have customer appeal. This calls for quality ingredients cleverly combined. Just any old mixture won't do—it takes a combination of three or four elements in subtle juxtaposition to make a good pintxo. And for a pintxo to succeed, it has to be relevant to local food ways—hence the ubiquity of bacalao (cod, salt or fresh) as an ingredient in Vizcaya, for example. Size is another important consideration—bigger does not necessarily mean better; in fact, making a pintxo too big can put people off because it might be difficult to eat. One mouthful—two at most—is the perfect size for a pintxo.

In pursuit of pintxos

In the early days, going out for pintxos was never thought of as going out to eat, certainly not formally and indeed hardly informally. The main point of it was the going from bar to bar with a bunch of friends and mulling over the day's events, drinking the odd txikito and nibbling on a banderilla or pintxo as you went. (As explained earlier, these were different items of food speared on a stick: the words 'tapa' and its derivative *'el tapeo'*—the practice of tapa-eating—are not the local terms in the Basque Country, though they are gradually creeping into use). In the old days, the group would often mark the end of the round with a burst of traditional song—Bilbaínos are famously musical. This still happens occasionally today, particularly among groups of people of a certain age, and it is still an eloquent expression of good will and camaraderie. Bar-owners are equally comradely in not charging for the round of drinks as a token of gratitude for the good atmosphere generated.

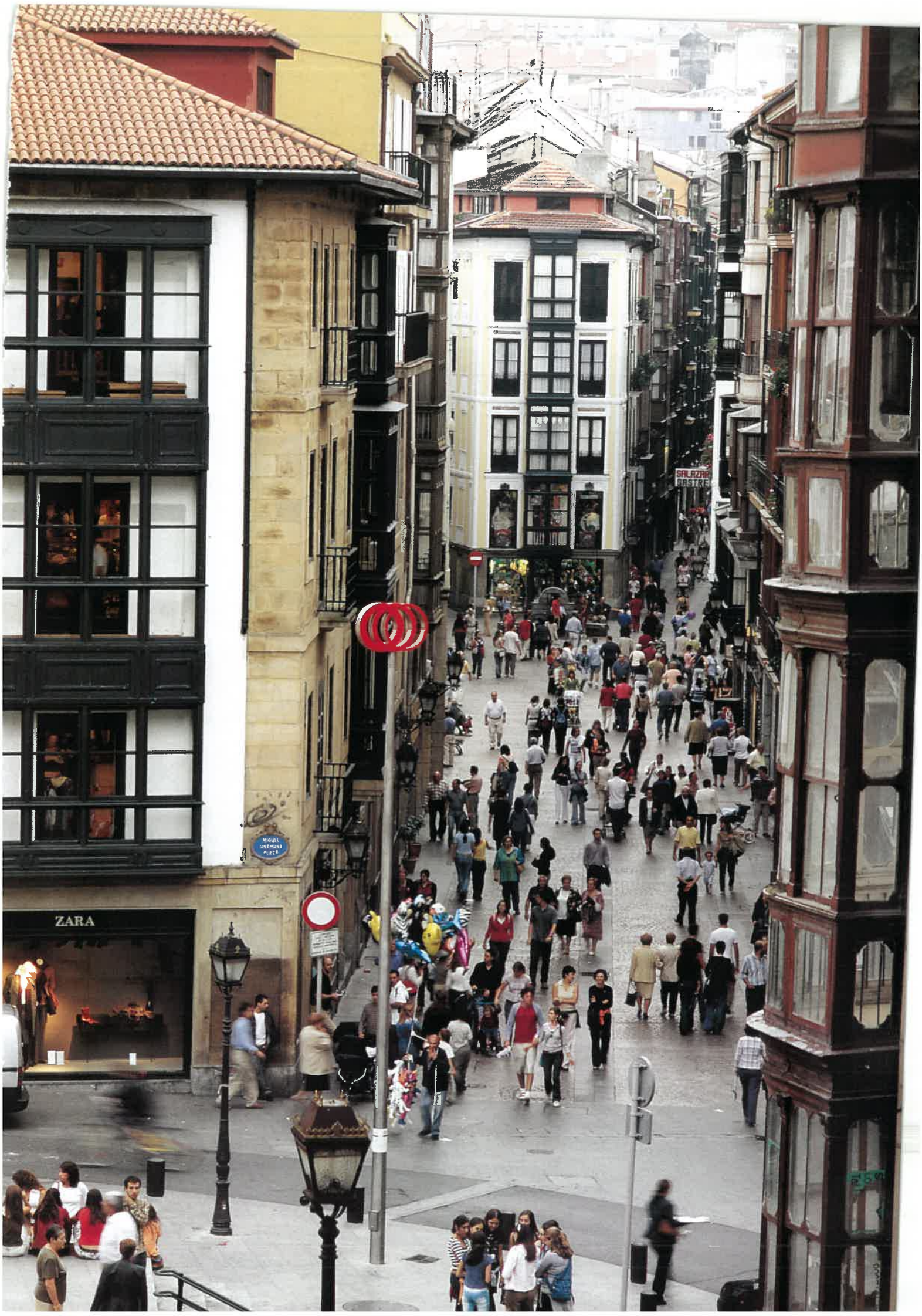
Pintxos originally came into being to enable drinkers to keep going without the alcohol taking effect too quickly. This was something of a double-edged sword which bar and restaurant owners soon learned to

Muselina de jabugo

(Cured ham mousse)

Cured ham chopped in the processor and amalgamated into a light olive oil mayonnaise to make a delicious paste.

Try it at: **Boulevard, Iruña**


ZARA

Bacalao a la vizcaína

(Salt-cod in the Vizcayan style)

For this dish, salt-cod is cooked in a sauce made from *choricero* peppers—dried red peppers—rehydrated and peeled.

Try it at: **Baste, El Globo, Víctor Montes, Gatz, El Victor, Xukela**

wield. While they did prevent people getting drunk too quickly, these little bits of salty food (herring, bacalao, sardines, olives, chilies, anchovies, tuna....) also made people thirsty, so they drank more. All in all, pintxos kept everyone happy.

It took a while for pintxos to acquire identity in their own right. When Spain emerged from years of hunger after the Civil War (1936-39) and food was no longer something you just filled up on, gastronomy as a whole moved on. This was when the pintxo started to evolve. With work becoming less manual, food ways began to reflect a new way of life: recipes became less hearty, sauces more refined, and the Basque Country's respected *etxekoandres*

remembers the first places to serve them: Amboto and Gorbea on calle Jardines (in the Old Quarter) where, even in the 1950s, there was a wide selection at the bar of both cold and hot pintxos (tuna, anchovies, cured ham, croquettes...) for a mere two or three pesetas. Miguel maintains that pintxos were a lunchtime phenomenon in those days, whereas they are now eaten more in the evenings (his neighborhood, Deusto, is residential, so there isn't a lunchtime rush of office workers). He comments on how much more

Rabas

(Squid rings)

Another classic tapa snack: squid rings dipped in batter and expertly fried.

Try it at: **Aritz, Oriotarra**

BILBAO'S SIETE CALLES: MUSICAL TAPAS

The reverberations generated by Basques knocking back tapas and wine is a sound like no other, especially in Bilbao's resonant Siete Calles. The Casco Viejo, the *zazpikaleak* or "seven streets" at the heart of the original 15th-century town on the right bank of the Nervión, comes alive twice a day, bars and taverns booming with laughter and a sense that all must be right in the world. With the ship-like, triple-tiered Mercado de la Ribera generating an avalanche of fresh products from land, sea, and in between, it is all but impossible to resist this midday and evening celebration of life, an epicurean ritual nourishing body and spirit alike.

Should there linger any doubt as to the role of art and design in the creation of tapas, Santiago Ruíz Bombin's **Xukela** offers a painter's palette worthy of Bilbao's Museo de Bellas Artes. Green and red peppers, truffles, red and black caviar, anchovies, parsely, and thyme all dazzle in one of the finest displays of delectable morsels in Bilbao and beyond, and in this gallery... the art is edible. **Rio-Oja** is hard to get past without a splash of *txakolí* and a *penaltí,* the ubiquitous pepper, olive, and anchovy medley of tastes.

Meanwhile, architectural treasures provide feasts for the eyes. At the end of Calle del Perro, corner of Calle Pelota across from the Palacio Yohn, a star-shaped design on a paving stone marks the spot for a view of the Basilica de la Begoña towering over the Casco Viejo. On October 11th, *txikiteros* dispense *txikis,* little shots of wine, and dance the high-kicking *Aurresku* on the feast of Santa Begoña.

Plaza Nueva, through Calle Victor, is a neoclassical square with 64 arches and twice as many tapas, *pintxos, montaditos, tentempiés,* and *cazuelitas.* **Café Bilbao** serves commendable cuisine surrounded by a photographic history of Bilbao, while **Víctor Montes** is a handsome compendium of tavern décor and fine products, and **Argoitia** has nonpareil *gambas a la plancha* (grilled shrimps).

Listen carefully: the sounds of sybaritic joy will guide you to another dozen memorable taverns.

Xukela. Calle del Perro, 2. Tel: (+34) 944 159 772
Rio-Oja. Calle del Perro, 4. Tel: (+34) 944 150 871
Café Bilbao. Plaza Nueva, 6. Tel: (+34) 944 151 671
Víctor Montes. Plaza Nueva, 8. Tel: (+34) 944 157 067
Argoitia. Plaza Nueva, 15.

George Semler *has lived in Madrid, San Sebastián, and Barcelona over the last three decades, while writing about food, wine, and travel for* Saveur, Forbes, Sky *and other publications.*

Bacalao frito

(Fried salt-cod)

This is one of the oldest recipes. Salt-cod is desalinated to just the right degree of saltiness then dipped in flour and egg and fried in good quality olive oil.

Try it at: **Aritz**

effort goes into pintxos these days, and is a firm believer that hot pintxos quickly pass their best if left to cool on the bar. In his hugely popular establishment, hot pintxos are made to order—no doubt one of the secrets of his success. He offers a menu of over 200 pintxos, the biggest sellers being *chipirón frito* (fried baby squid) and *brandada de chipirón* (baby squid brandade). Other popular ones include *puerro relleno* (stuffed leek), *bacalao relleno de foie y hongos* (salt-cod stuffed with foie gras and mushroom), *chistorra* (a type of sausage), and *tripaki* (tripe), all from his selection of 18 hot pintxos. Miguel serves his famous *'agua de Bilbao'* (carbonated wine) when people dither about what to drink, though the usual choice is a *crianza* red. He is currently working on a book about pintxos.

Dioni Lasa, born in 1920, started work in catering at the age of 17 and can therefore claim to have spent his life among pots and pans. Like Genaro Pildain, owner of the Guria restaurant (a Bilbao institution), he knows the Vizcayan restaurant trade inside out. Dioni can talk about bars that no longer exist: Narru, for example, or Yarito, where they used to serve *pimientos rellenos* (stuffed peppers), chipirones (baby squid) and *pintxos morunos* (miniature pork kebabs). And he is equally *au fait* with current ones such as Artajo, on calle Ledesma, where they serve *mojojones* (mussels), and bar Koki, on Hurtado de Amézaga. But he waxes most lyrical about banderillas and 1950s classics such as *huevos rellenos* (prawns with egg and mayonnaise). Thirty-five years ago the restaurant that Dioni owns today (Monterrey, at Gran Vía 6) used to serve lobster mayonnaise on a little slice of bread for just two-and-a-half pesetas. And, he recalls, there were *rollos de merluza* (hake rolls) and, of course, *tortillas* (Spanish omelets), too...

Dioni thinks that pintxo competitions are a good thing, and credits them with having given new impetus to an everyday custom and turned it into something innovative. Even so, he still believes the whole point of a txikiteo is the txikito (the wine) and that people only bother with pintxos if they are appealing.

Our last practitioner is Víctor Montes, whose bar of the same name on the Plaza Nueva, with its beautiful late 19th-century Modernista frontage, is another not-to-be-missed destination for anyone within hailing distance of the Old Quarter. Víctor, too, has spent his whole life involved with food, though only at his present premises since 1983. Like Dioni, talking about Bilbao's classic pintxos makes him nostalgic: "What I remember as a typical pintxo was that one with hard-boiled egg, king prawn and mayonnaise—always marvelous quality—it was almost a standard in

Montadito de gulas

(Mock elver canapé)

Marinated salmon on savory-spread toast and topped with *'gulas'* (mock angulas) which contrast nicely with the richness of the salmon.

Try it at: **Xukela, Iruña, Boulevard**

Tapas Routes in Bilbao

Bilbao has several, clearly differentiated *pintxo* (or *txikito)* areas. The principal, and best known, one is in the Casco Viejo, the historic Old Quarter of town. There, the legendary calle Somera is a classic *txikiteo* destination, still evocative of the pintxo outings of the old days with lots of laughing and singing. Over the last 50 years, areas specializing in this sort of eating and drinking have sprung up all over town, the latest being the pedestrian area of the Ensanche. Whichever part of town you choose, you are sure to find good quality pintxos in virtually any bar. Here is a selection of just a few to give you some idea of what the city has to offer, ranging from classic to cutting-edge:

The Old Quarter

The Old Quarter tends to be the most attractive part of any town, and Bilbao's is no exception. Its famous 'seven streets' encompass a whole cross-section of Basque gastronomy for stand-up eaters. This is still the destination of choice for many meeting friends for a drink and a snacklet at the end of the working day. Good shops and restaurants add to its appeal.

Recommending any one street for pintxo tasting is quite a task, but suffice it to say that you should not miss the junction of calle del Perro with calle Santa María, or the Plaza Nueva, where the bar food is the stuff of legend.

Boulevard

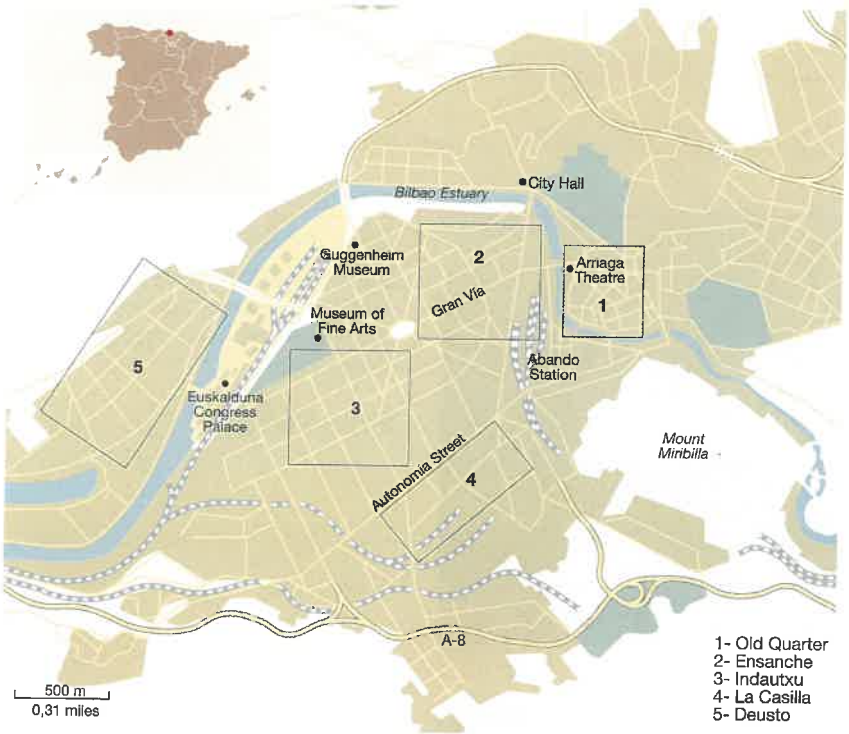
Paseo del Arenal, 3. Tel: (+34) 944 153 128
Specialties: *Muselina de jabugo* (mousseline of jabugo ham), *croquetas de bacalao* (salt-cod croquettes), *mejillones rellenos* (stuffed mussels), *gambas a la gabardina* (prawns in batter).

Los Fueros

Los Fueros, 6. Tel: (+34) 944 150 614
Specialties: *Gambas a la plancha* (griddled prawns), *percebes* (goose barnacles), *mojojón a la hondarresa* (mussels), *quisquillón* (brown shrimp).

Restaurante Victor

Plaza Nueva, 2. Tel: (+34) 944 151 678
Specialties: *Montaditos variados* (assorted canapés), *croquetas* (croquettes), *bacalao al pil pil* (salt-cod in pil pil sauce), six types of *tortilla* (Spanish omelet), *triángulo primavera* (canapé of lettuce, apple, palm heart, hard-boiled egg, mayonnaise and king prawn).



Víctor Montes
Plaza Nueva, 8. Tel: (+34) 944 157 067
Specialties: *Chatka en ensalada* (crab salad), *bacalao a la vizcaína* (Vizcaya-style salt-cod), *montaditos de ibérico* (canapés of Ibérico cured ham), *ventresca de bonito con pimiento del piquillo* (belly of tuna with peppers), *montado de salmón con huevo* (salmon and egg canapé); *sucedáneo de caviar* (caviar-style fish roe).

Café Bilbao
Plaza Nueva, 6. Tel: (+34) 944 151 671
Specialties: *Delicias de pato al Pedro Ximénez* (duck morsels with PX dressing), *canutillo de txangurro* (pastry horn filled with flaked poached spider crab); *crêpe de ternera y setas* (beef and wild mushroom pancake), *mero horneado* (baked grouper).

Brandada de bacalao

(Salt-cod brandade)

Creamy brandade made with flaked salt-cod spread on crisp toast, topped with hollandaise sauce and gratinéed before serving.

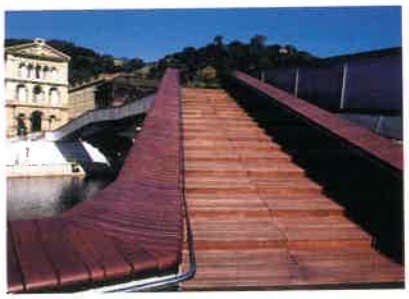
Try it at: **El Globo**

Baste
María Muñoz, 6. Tel: (+34) 944 150 855
Specialties: *Mejillones rellenos* (stuffed mussels), *croquetas* (croquettes), *tortillas variadas* (assorted Spanish omelets); *pimientos rellenos de setas y gambas* (peppers stuffed with wild mushrooms and prawns).

Rio Oja
Perro, 4. Tel: (+34) 944 150 871
Specialties: *Morros y patas de cerdo a la vizcaína* (pig snout and trotters in the Vizcaya style), *chipirones en su tinta* (baby squid in their own ink), *bacalao al pil pil* (salt-cod in pil pil sauce).

Eguiluz
Perro, 4. Tel: (+34) 944 150 242
Specialties: *Caracoles* (snails), *tigres* (mussels stuffed with sofrito and chopped mussel meat, coated in bechamel, crumbed and fried); *chuletón* (veal chop, served in small pieces).

Xukela
Perro, 4. Tel: (+34) 944 159 772
Specialties: *Calabacín con foie y salsa de frambuesas* (zucchini with foie gras and raspberry sauce), *foie con champiñón* (foie gras with mushroom), *foie con calabacín* (foie gras with zucchini), *queso de cabra con pimiento y orégano* (goat's cheese with pepper and oregano), *bacalao marinado con pimiento verde* (marinated salt-cod with green pepper), *chicharro ahumado con pimiento rojo de cristal* (smoked horse mackerel with local red pepper).



Gatz
Santa María, 10. Tel: (+34) 944 154 861
Specialties: *Cococha al cava con pil pil de calabaza* (hake cheek in cava with marrow pil pil sauce), *tortilla de bacalao* (salt-cod omelet), *hígado de ternera con cebolla confitada* (calves' liver with caramelized onion), steak tartare, *hoja de berza rellena de ropa vieja* (cabbage leaf stuffed with stewed beef steak).

Ensanche

This is modern Bilbao, where the banks, fashionable shops, official bodies, and so on are to be found, and which has benefited from the Gran Vía's recent pedestrianization and face-lift. There are two types of establishments in this part of town: top of the range and everyday, the latter being the haunts of local residents and employees. Calle Diputación, where the range of pintxos is fantastic, is particularly recommended.

Iruña
Berástegui, 5. Tel: (+34) 944 237 021
Specialties: *Montadito de gulas y salmón* (salmon and mock elver canapé), *serranito* (lardo with flakes of Ibérico ham canapé), *bacalao al pil pil* (salt-cod in pil pil sauce), *setas con jamón* (wild mushrooms with cured ham).

New Inn
Avda. Urkijo, 9. Tel: (+34) 944 562 000
Specialties: *Bocadito de jamón y pimiento verde* (cured ham and green pepper), *milhojas de berenjena y verduras* (eggplant

and vegetable puff pastry), sandwiches, *tortillas variadas* (selection of omelets).

La Taberna de los Mundos
Lutxana, 1. Tel: (+34) 944 168 181
Specialties: *Rollito de pescado marinado con verduras escabechadas y muselina de ajo* (roll of marinated fish with soused vegetables and garlic mousseline), *bacalao con pil pil de choricero* (salt-cod in choricero pepper pil pil sauce), *bocaditos de bonito con anchoa y espinaca* (tuna, anchovy and spinach).

El Colmado Ibérico
Avda. Urquijo, 20. Tel: (+34) 944 436 001
Specialties: *Pan de la casa* (toasted country bread with olive oil, cured ham and fried egg), *pimiento relleno de embutidos ibéricos y queso ardiente* (pepper stuffed with Ibérico charcuterie and melted cheese).

El Globo
Diputación, 8. Tel: (+34) 944 154 221
Specialties: *Brandada de bacalao* (salt-cod brandade), *bacalao gratinado* (salt-cod gratiné), *rollito de salmón con salsa tártara* (salmon roll with tartare sauce), *queso con paté* (cheese with paté).

Lepanto
Plaza Eguileor, 2. Tel: (+34) 944 166 256
Specialties: *Bacalao frito* (fried salt-cod), *San Jacobo* (fried ham and cheese in breadcrumbs), *berenjena rellena de jamón y queso* (eggplant stuffed with ham and cheese), *bacalao desmigado sobre dos clases de pimientos* (flaked salt-cod on two types of peppers), *salmón relleno con pil pil de hongos* (stuffed salmon with wild mushroom pil pil sauce).

Lasa
Diputación, 3. Tel: (+34) 944 240 103
Specialties: *Rape y langostino en brocheta* (monkfish and king prawn brochette), *tosta de foie a la reducción de vino tinto* (toast canapé of foie gras with red wine dressing), *tosta de queso fresco con salmón* (toast canapé of salmon and cream cheese).

Los Candiles
Diputación, 3. Tel: (+34) 944 241 479
Specialties: *Alcachofa con espárrago* (artichoke and asparagus), *foie templado a la pimienta* (warm, peppered foie gras), *erizo de mar* (sea urchin—seasonally available), *calamares fritos* (fried squid).

Mugarra
Ercilla, 14. Tel: (+34) 944 248 817
Specialties: *Lasaña de bacalao con calabacín* (salt-cod and zucchini lasagne), *tortilla paisana de setas y jabugo* (country-style mushroom and jabugo ham omelet), *bonito escabechado* (soused tuna), *penca con crema de ibéricos* (chard stem with Ibérico ham cream), *abanico de ahumados azules* (selection of smoked oily fish).

Metro Moyua
Gran Vía, 40. Tel: (+34) 944 249 273
Specialties: *Ensalada de canónigos, frambuesas y bonito en salazón* (lamb's lettuce, raspberry and pickled tuna salad), *Villeroy ahumado de queso* (smoked cheese Villeroy), *tortillas distintos gustos* (selection of Spanish omelets).

SIXTH BILBAO-VIZCAYA PINTXO FAIR 2003

Halfway through the year, Bilbao holds its *Muestra de Pintxos* (Pincho Fair), a competitive event backed by some of the Basque Country's big finance companies with the aim of galvanizing the catering sector and promoting pintxos to even greater popularity. Entries are judged by a panel of journalists and foodies sporting various outsize versions of *txapela* (traditional Basque beret). A new feature of the most recent Fair was that the competition was thrown open to bars and restaurants from all over the province, rather than just Bilbao.

Bacalao con piperrada

(Salt-cod with pipérade)

Flaked salt-cod in a light pil-pil sauce served with cooked red and green peppers in their own juices.

Try it at: **Baste, El Globo, Víctor Montes, Gatz, El Victor, Xukela**

Indautxu

This well-off area of town, very close to the Gran Vía, is characterized by its broad streets. The most interesting of these, for pintxo-eating purposes, are García Rivero, Licenciado Poza (an essential port of call), Estraunza and Plaza Campuzano, on all of which there are long-established traditional bars.

Alameda
Avda. Urquijo, 40. Tel: (+34) 944 435 008
Specialties: *Felipada* (one of Bilbao's most popular triangular bread-based canapés: lettuce, mayonnaise, pickled anchovy and tabasco); *chipirón frito* (fried baby squid), *ensaladilla rusa* (Russian salad), *tortilla de bonito* (tuna omelet), *anchoa rellena de calabacín y cebolla* (anchovy stuffed with zucchini and onion).

La Compañía del Ron
Máximo Aguirre, 23. Tel: (+34) 944 213 069
Specialties: *Rulito de bacon y langostinos sobre crema de roquefort* (bacon and king prawn roll with roquefort cream), *sopa fría de tomate y pepino con gelatina de Sherry* (cold tomato and cucumber soup with sherry jelly), *crujiente de ibérico y anchoa en su misma vinagreta* (Ibérico ham and anchovy crisp with its own vinaigrette), *huevo relleno de marisco* (seafood-stuffed egg).

Gredos
Avda. Urquijo, 50. Tel: (+34) 944 211 845
Specialties: *Tortillas variadas* (assorted omelets), *salmón* (salmon), *chatka* (crab), *bonito con tomate y huevo* (tuna with tomato and egg).

Estoril
A Bilbao classic.
Plaza Campuzano, 3. Tel: (+34) 944 411 033
Specialties: *Gambas a la gabardina* (prawns in batter), *frito con croqueta y gamba* (fried assortment including croquette and prawn), *tortillas variadas* (assorted omelets), *barquillo de bonito, txangurro y buey de mar* (tartlet of tuna and mixed crabmeat).

Ziripot
Licenciado Poza, 46. Tel: (+34) 944 270 530
Specialties: *Rollito de chipirón y gamba con pil pil* (baby squid and prawn roll with pil pil sauce), *fritos variados* (fried assortment), *tortillas* (Spanish omelets), *pimientos rellenos de carne* (meat-stuffed peppers), *setas con gulas* (wild mushrooms with mock elvers), *milhojas de rabo de buey* (puff pastry with oxtail filling).

La casilla

This once suburban area has now become an integral part of Bilbao. It, too, has its share of fantastic bars and *tabernas* where the pintxos observe a balance between the traditional and new wave.

Aritz
Zugastinovia, 4. Tel: (+34) 944 216 734
Specialties: *Tierra y mar* (a modern take on traditional pintxo ingredients: tuna with oil-preserved Piquillo pepper sauce), *txapeldun* (boiled ham, bechamel and mushroom sauce), *foie fresco a la plancha con salsa de uvas* (griddled fresh foie gras with grape sauce), *sepillo* (wild mushrooms with Piquillo peppers and cheese sauce), *penca rellena de ibérico y queso con crema de espinacas* (chard stem stuffed with Ibérico ham and cheese with spinach cream).

Las Torres
Simón Bolivar, 27. Tel: (+34) 944 418 982
Specialties: *Tortilla de jamón y queso* (ham and cheese omelet), *tortilla de espinacas y bonito* (spinach and tuna omelet), *ibéricos* (Ibérico charcuterie), *bocadillitos* (miniature sandwiches).

Deusto

Until its incorporation in 1925, Deusto lay outside the city walls. It is now easily accessed via the new Euskalduna bridge, and the very high standard of pintxos on offer attests to its long tradition as a txikiteo area.

Bordatxo
Ramón y Cajal, 24. Tel: (+34) 944 474 500
Specialties: *Crujientes de callos rellenos de ciruelas* (crunched tripe stuffed with prune), *talo de maíz relleno de rulo de cabra y tapenade* (corn crêpe of goat's cheese with anchovy and olive paste), *tortilla de morcilla* (black pudding/blood sausage omelet).

Oriotarra
Blas de Otero, 30. Tel: (+34) 944 470 830
Specialties: *Tripaki* (a work of art for tripe enthusiasts), *chipirón frito* (fried baby squid), *puerro relleno de queso* (leek stuffed with cheese), *bacalao con foie y hongos* (salt-cod with foie gras and wild mushrooms) and—this establishment's top pintxo—*brandada de chipirón* (baby squid brandade).

RECIPES

10

Recipes
María Jesús Gil
de Antuñano and
Rafael Medina
Elaboration of recipes
María Jesús Gil
de Antuñano
Styling
Miguel Cruz Faber
Photos
Toya Legido/ICEX
Translation
Jenny McDonald

10 RECIPES

CALANDA PEACHES

Cold Calanda Peach Soup

(Sopa fria de melocotón de Calanda)

Serves 4:

1 kg / 2 1/4 lb fresh Calanda peaches
1 leek
1/2 onion
750 ml / 3 1/4 cup / 1 1/4 pt poultry stock
100 ml / 1/2 cup / 4 fl oz single cream
40 ml / 3 tbsp oil
1 knob butter
Salt
Pepper
Nutmeg
Cinnamon
3 cloves

Garnish:

2 peaches
150 g / 5 1/2 oz Ibérico ham
Fresh mint

Chop the onion and the white part of the leek and sauté gently in the hot oil in a saucepan. Wash the peaches, cut in half and remove the pits. Cut into pieces, add to the onion and leek mixture, and fry gently together. Cover with the stock, season with salt, pepper, a little grated nutmeg, a pinch of cinnamon and the cloves stuck into a piece of onion (this makes it easier to remove them later). Cover and simmer for 10 minutes or until the peaches are soft. Remove the onion with the cloves, blend the soup, add the cream and bring to the boil. Check the seasoning, add the butter and leave to cool. At the last minute, sprinkle with mint and serve with peaches and ham.

Garnish:

Blanch and peel the peaches. Cut into thin slices. Cut the ham into strips.

Preparation time:

30 min.

Cooking time:

15 min.

Recommended wine:

A rosé from DO Tacoronte, 100% Listán Negro, with its varietal aroma of strawberries and blackberries, will complement the fragrance of the peaches. Also characteristic of Listán grapes are a slight acidity and freshness and hints of eucalyptus which combine well with the aroma of the cinnamon, clove and nutmeg.

10 RECIPES

Breast of Duck with Calanda Peach and Pepper Sauce

(Pechuga de pato con salsa de pimiento y melocotones de Calanda)

Serves 4:

2 duck breasts (magrets)
Salt
Pepper

Peach and pepper sauce:

500 g / 1lb 2 oz fresh Calanda peaches
6 Piquillo peppers
100 ml / 1/2 cup / 4 fl oz dry white wine
100 ml / 1/2 cup / 4 fl oz concentrated chicken stock
1 tsp butter
1 tsp cornstarch
Salt
Pepper

Garnish:

500 g / 1lb 2 oz Calanda peaches
8 Piquillo peppers

Make diagonal cuts in the skin of the duck breasts and season with salt and pepper. Fry, skin side down, in a hot frying pan for 2 minutes until the fat begins to run. Roast in the oven at 190° C / 375° F for 4 minutes. Remove, baste with the pan juices then roast for 2 more minutes and remove. Drain on kitchen paper to remove any excess fat. To serve, pour a little sauce onto each plate and top with the duck cut in thick slices. Garnish with the peach slices and peppers.

Peach and pepper sauce:

Pour off all the fat from the pan, add the wine and deglaze, scraping the pan with a spatula. Cook until reduced by one quarter. Add the stock, after first setting aside a few spoonfuls, and the butter. Dissolve the cornstarch in the remaining stock then slowly pour into the boiling mixture to bind the sauce, stirring all the time. The sauce should be slightly thick. Wash and pit the peaches. Cut the flesh into pieces and add. Also cut the peppers into pieces and add, then boil the mixture a little. Blend the sauce and strain well. Re-heat until a good color and serve.

Garnish:

Blanch the remaining peaches, peel, slice and bring to the boil in the sauce together with the Piquillo peppers.

Preparation time:

30 min.

Cooking time:

8 min. for the magret, 45 min. for the sauce

Recommended wine:

A red DO Penedés, 100% Merlot, offers the strength of grapes grown under the Mediterranean sun. With its full flavor and mild, slightly sweet tannins, this will be the ideal partner for the rich duck meat and will be just right to complement the peaches and peppers in the sauce.

Calanda Peaches in Wine with Yogurt Sauce

(Melocotones de Calanda al vino con salsa de yogur)

Serves 4:

4 Calanda peaches in wine
(or 4 fresh Calanda peaches, 1 bottle Toro red wine, 350 g / 12 oz sugar)
100 ml / 1/2 cup / 4 fl oz wine syrup from the preserved peaches
100 g / 3 1/2 oz sugar
100 g / 3 1/2 oz cranberry jam
Fresh mint leaves

Yogurt sauce:

2 plain yogurts
2 tbsp honey
100 ml / 1/2 cup / 4 fl oz table cream
Cinnamon

If you cannot obtain Calanda peaches in wine, blanch fresh peaches for 2 minutes in boiling water and peel. Dissolve the sugar in the wine and bring to the boil. Insert the peaches, cover the pan and simmer for half an hour. Remove the peaches and reduce the wine syrup until approximately one glassful is left. If you use Calanda peaches in wine, first drain them. Then take one glassful of the syrup and dissolve the sugar in it. Boil for 3 minutes. Add the cranberry jam, stir and simmer for 5 minutes. Insert the peaches, leave to cool and refrigerate for 12 hours. Serve on dishes with a few spoonfuls of the wine sauce and a little yogurt sauce. Sprinkle with cinnamon and decorate with fresh mint.

Yogurt sauce:

Beat the yogurts with the honey and gradually mix in the table cream.

Preparation time:

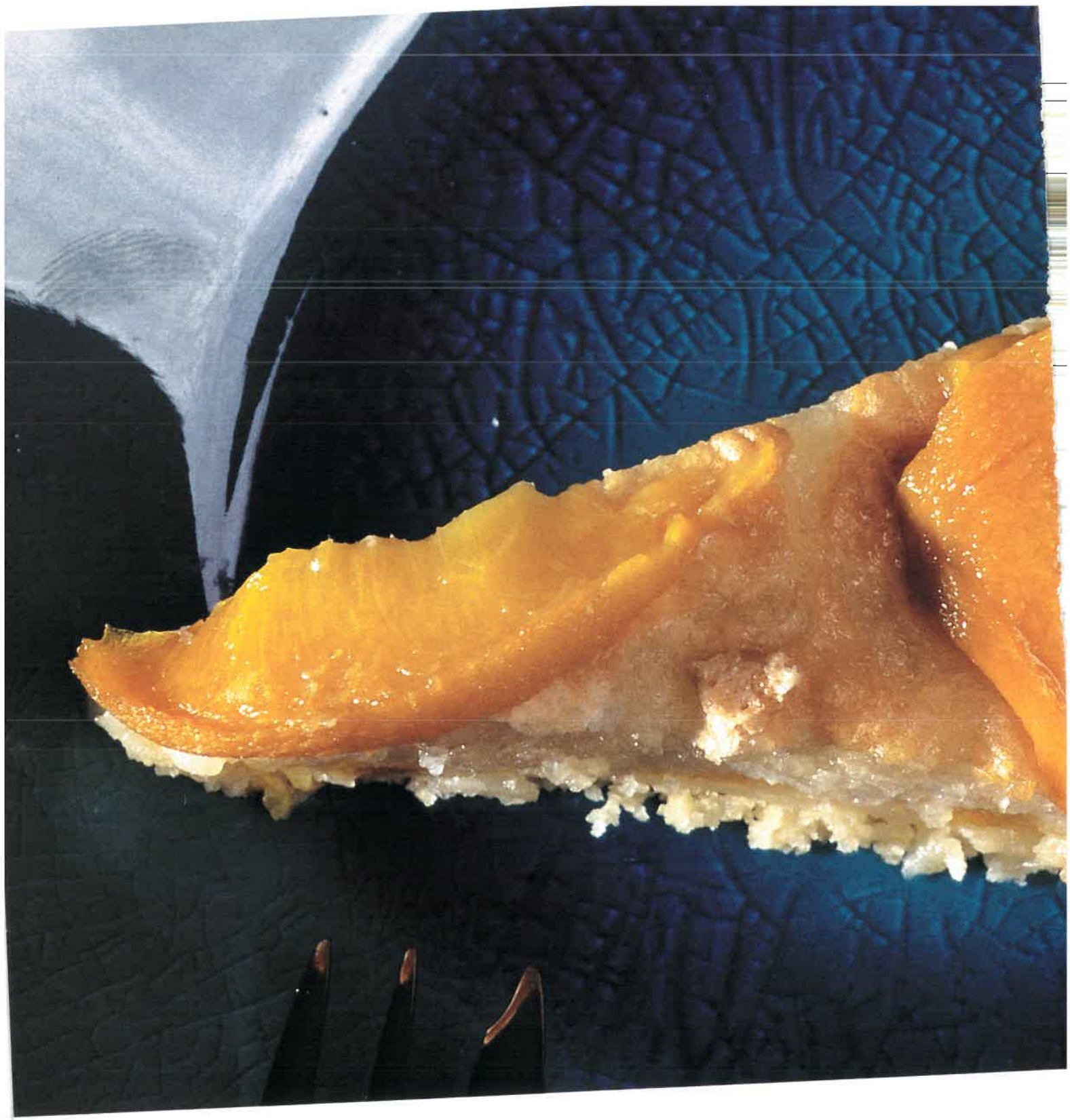
3 min. for Calanda peaches in wine, 15 min. for fresh Calanda peaches

Cooking time:

15 min. for Calanda peaches in wine, 1 hour for fresh Calanda peaches

Recommended wine:

A red DO Toro made from Tinta de Toro grapes. Served at about 11° C / 51° F, the variety's characteristic aroma of ripe blackberries and raspberries will enhance beautifully the flavors condensed in the peach syrup.



Peach Tart

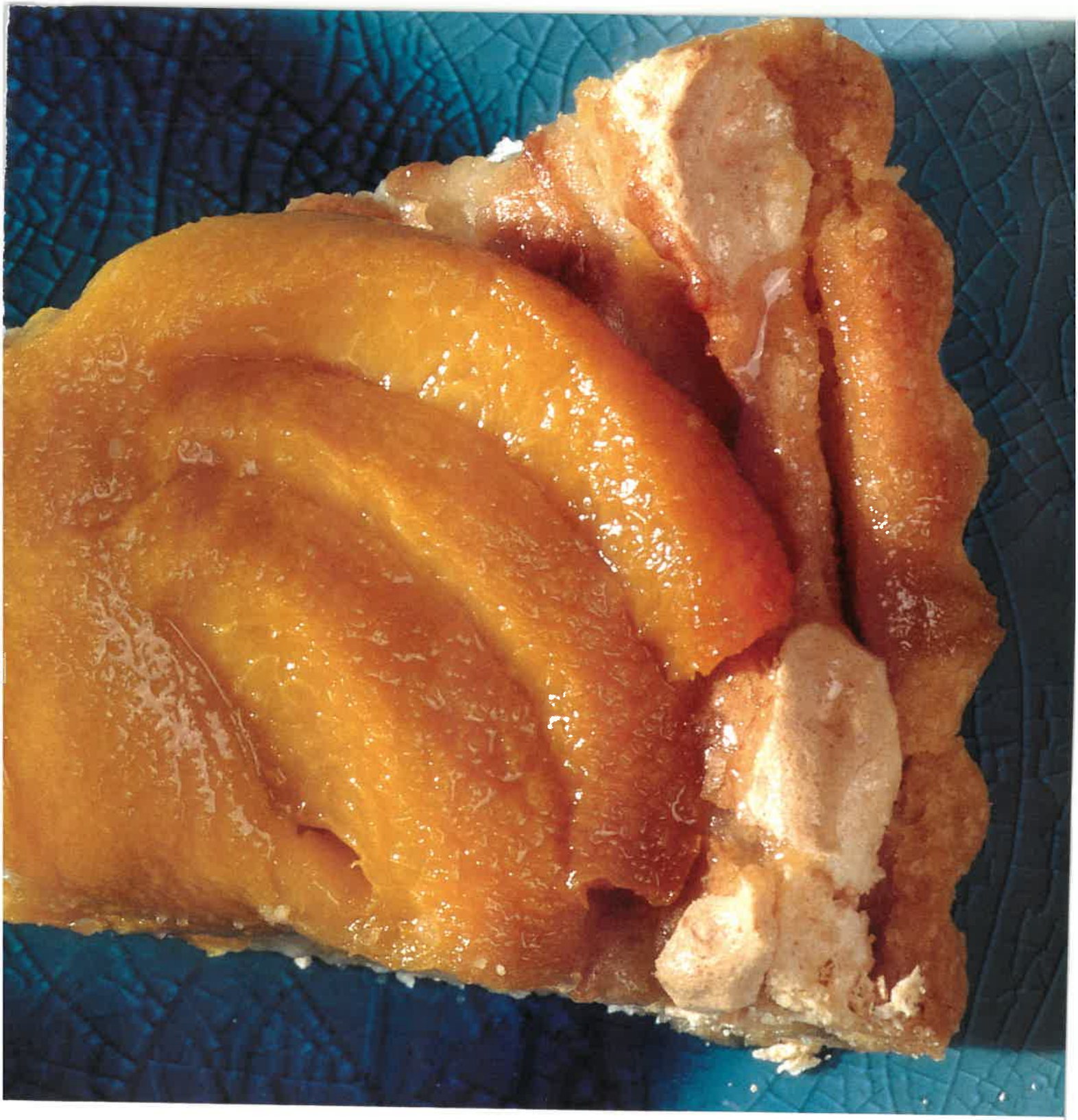
(Tarta de melocotón)

Serves 8:
1 jar Calanda peaches

Pastry:
125 g / 4 1/2 oz butter
3 egg yolks
75 g / 3 oz sugar
200 g / 7 oz flour
1 tsp baking powder
Butter for greasing the tin
Flour for the tin

Filling:
3 egg whites
200 g / 7 oz sugar
250 g / 9 oz peeled, ground almonds
Zest of 1 lemon

Pastry:
Work the butter with the sugar to form a paste. Add the egg yolks one by one and finally the flour mixed with the baking powder. Grease a 30



cm / 9 inch tin with a removable base and sprinkle with flour. Line the base and walls with the pastry.

Filling:

Beat the egg whites with the sugar until stiff. Add the lemon zest and gently fold in the ground almonds. Drain the peaches and slice. Place half the slices on the pastry base and cover with the almond meringue. Bake in the oven at 175° C / 350° F for half-an-hour. Remove and arrange the rest of the peach slices on top. Bake for a further half hour. Cover with a sheet of aluminum foil or greased paper to prevent from burning.
Serve warm with a little table cream.

Preparation time:
90 min.

Cooking time:
1 hour

Recommended wine:
A young, sweet, white Mistela from the DO Terra Alta, 100% Garnacha Blanca. A fruity, smooth wine with a slight creaminess in the mouth, it will go well with the buttery pastry and the almonds in the meringue.

10 RECIPES

Calanda Peaches with a Meringue Topping

(Melocotones de Calanda rellenos con merengue)

Serves 4:

4 Calanda peaches in syrup
1 tbsp butter

Custard filling:

2 egg yolks
75 g / 3 oz sugar
100 ml / 1/2 cup / 4 fl oz milk
50 ml / 4 tbsp peach liqueur

Meringue:

2 egg whites
75 g / 3 oz sugar
1 pinch salt
Lemon juice
Icing sugar

Cut the peaches in half and remove the pits. Grease an ovenproof dish and arrange the peaches in it, cut side up. Fill the peach centers with the custard and top with a mound of meringue. Sprinkle with icing sugar and brown in the oven, or caramelize the sugar with a red-hot metal spatula.

Custard filling:

Beat the egg yolks with the sugar in a thick-bottomed pan. Add the boiling milk, stirring all the time, then the peach liqueur and continue to heat until thick.

Meringue:

Beat the egg whites until thick together with the pinch of salt, a few drops of lemon juice and the sugar until very shiny and smooth.

Preparation time:

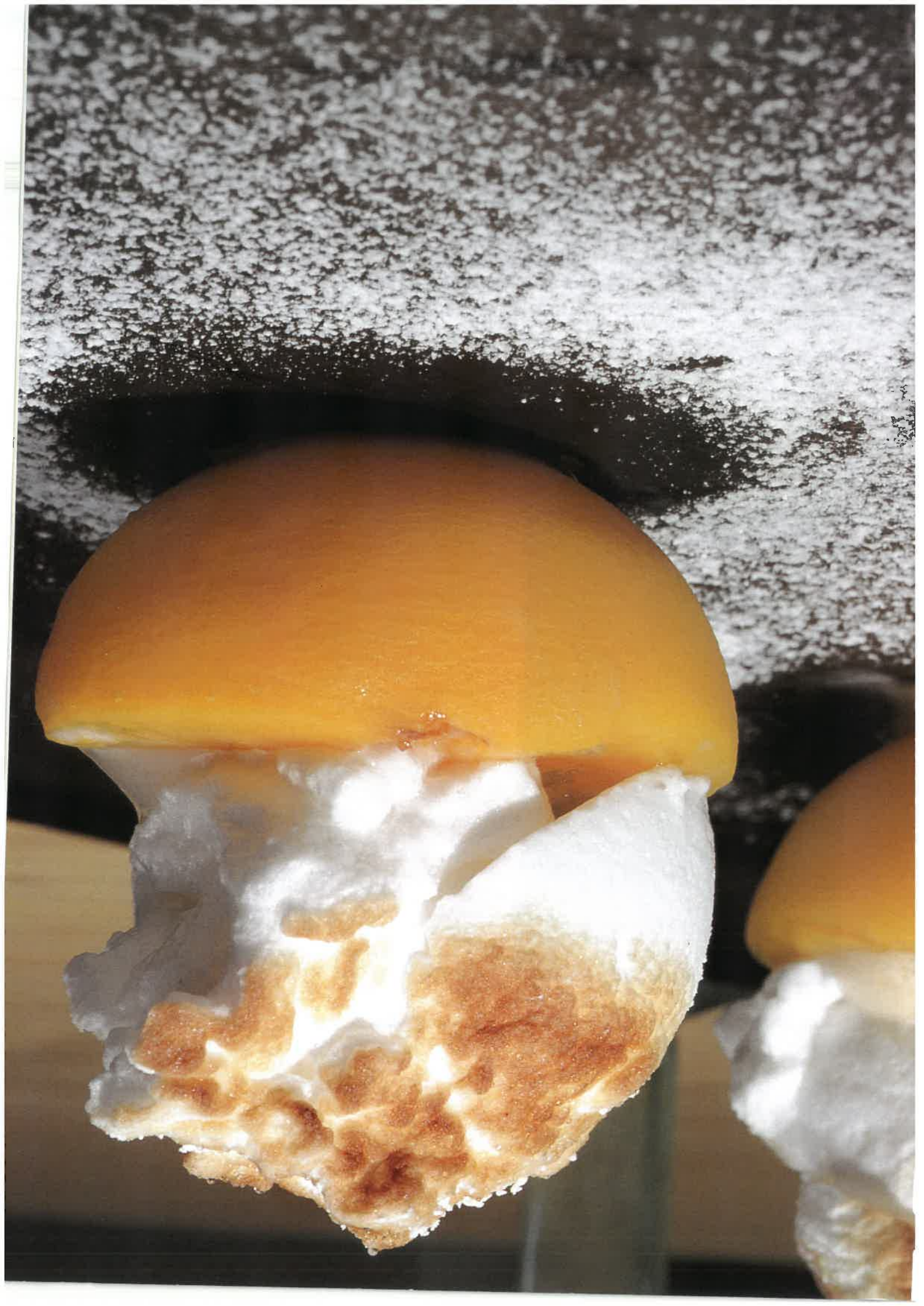
45 min.

Cooking time:

20 min. for the cream, 10 min. for browning the meringue

Recommended wine:

A sweet, white wine from the DO Málaga, 100% Moscatel, preferably one that is more fruity than sweet to lighten the sweetness of the meringue and enhance the aroma of the peach.

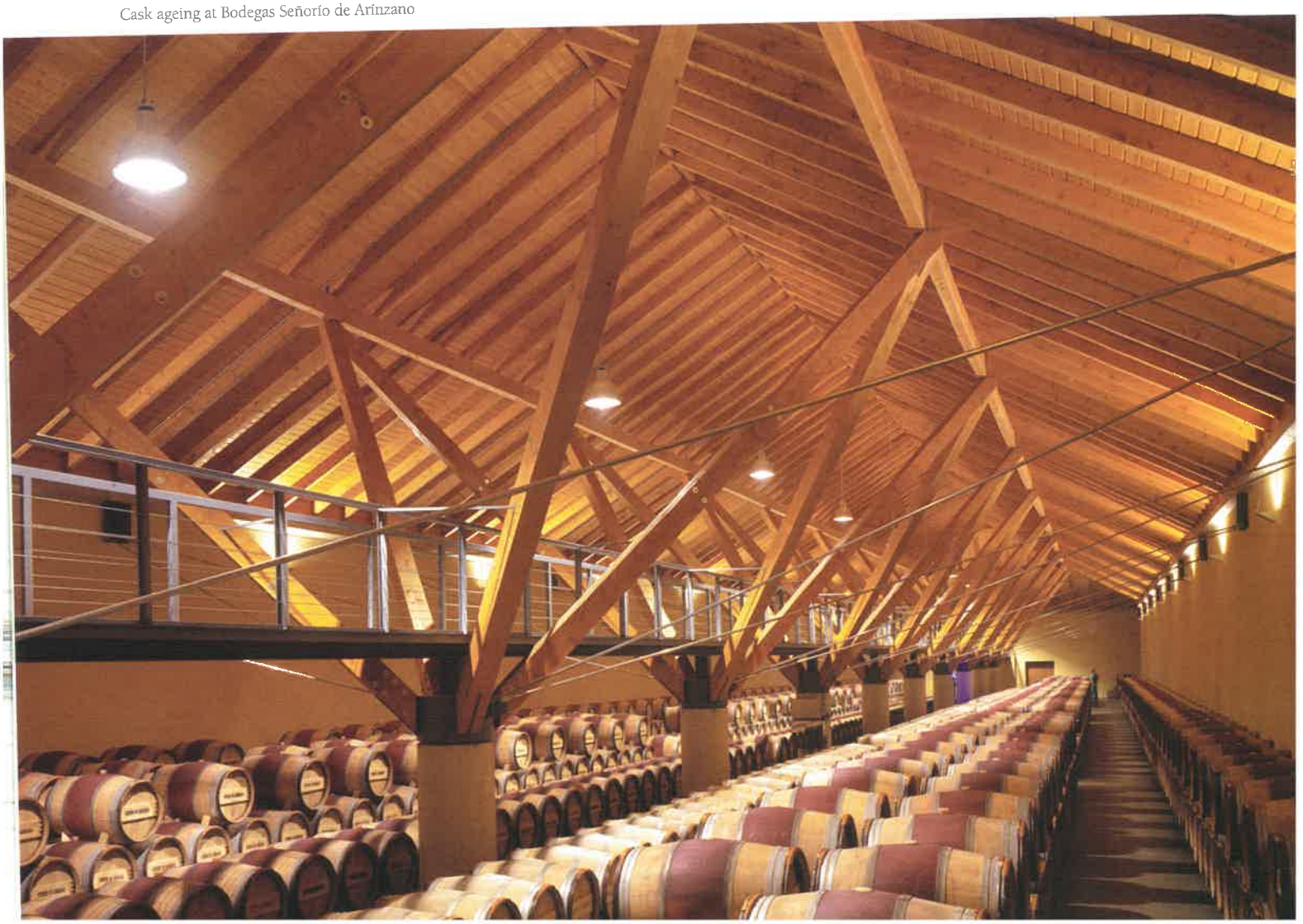


The Architecture of Wine through the Centuries

Part 3

Los Angeles. A group of friends around a bottle of wine. Confidences, news and shared projects are interspersed with comments on the Navarran Chardonnay—a crisp, well-structured, balanced, harmonious wine with a personality. One widely-traveled young woman recalls the space inside the new cathedral of Our Lady of Angels built by "that Spanish architect, Moneo". Sitting on a red sofa, they enjoy each other's company, with jokes, laughter and further comments on the wine—intense, well balanced, reminiscent of forests, a complex finish. Someone uncorks another bottle. And the glasses are topped up. From one end of the sofa, with the freshness of the wine on his lips, a young architect states, "a magnificent white wine, identical to the bodega in Spain designed by Rafael Moneo to make it".

Cask ageing at Bodegas Señorío de Arínzano



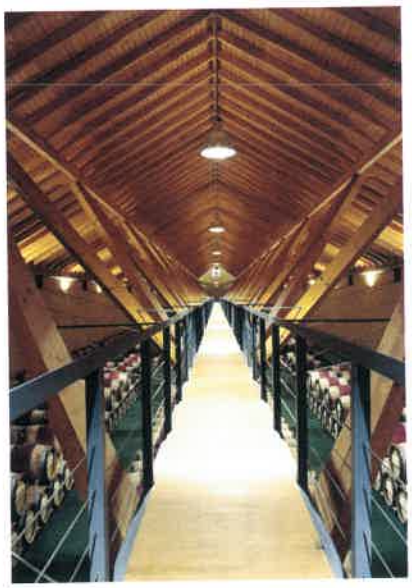
Façade of Bodegas Ysios

Form follows FUNCTION

TEXT
BINGEN URQUIJO GARAY

TRANSLATION
JENNY MCDONALD

Thousands of kilometers from Los Angeles, the winery built by Rafael Moneo (1937) blends into the oak forests of Señorío de Arínzano close to a small Navarran village called Aberín. In the 16th century, the property belonged to Don Lope de Eulate and was traditionally used for growing cereal crops. The estate boasts three singular buildings: the Cabo de Armería Palace, a masonry tower dotted with arrow loops and topped by two stone soldiers, built in the Middle Ages; the Casona built in the 18th century with a round archway bearing the family coat of arms, and the early 19th-century, neoclassical chapel of St Martin built from stone and topped with a pediment and three stone statues.
Julián Chivite bought the Señorío de Arínzano in 1988 to continue here with the good work done by a family that had been producing wines since 1647. This was the start of today's wine estate. The soil was plowed and fertilized, and 200 hectares / 494.2 acres of vineyards were planted with varieties including Tempranillo, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Chardonnay. The three historical buildings formed part of a landscape of vines and oaks giving way, along the banks of the Ega river, to poplars and ashes. The Chivite family was keen to produce the best possible wines in an environment in which nature and history were essential players, on an estate in which the most sophisticated techniques would respect the essence of the traditional buildings, the landscape and the native forests.



Of Essences...

Rafael Moneo, a friend of the Chivite family, based his design on this philosophy. His building embraces the existing constructions, establishing a dialog in harmony with them and with the landscape.
The new winery, inaugurated in 2002, is structured as an austere, three-winged unit, in which elegance and functionality are combined.
The first wing is a square comprising five halls in which the grapes are received and pressed. Each hall has a pitched roof, in line with the pediment of St Martin's church. Also included is a building for the vats used for malolactic fermentation of the wines.
The second, and largest, wing is a hall at a lower level that houses the barrels for ageing. The ceiling is lined with warm French oak, the same wood the barrels are made of. The small columns holding up the roof are a surprising combination of oak and aluminum, of tradition and modernity. From the outside, this wing forms a background for the historical buildings. But Moneo wanted his building to pass unnoticed. The textured concrete walls are gradually taking on the color of the old stone buildings, and the copper roofs have been treated to blend into their wooded surroundings.
The last wing, in parallel to the first, closes up the unit and imitates the volume of the belfry of St Martin's church. It houses the bottling plant, the offices, the warehouse and the tasting room. In contrast with the sober functionality of the buildings in general, the tasting room has a theatrical touch to it. Its atmosphere is warm, with a large window allowing tasters to feel the harmony of the estate on which the Chivite 125 collection is produced—with Merlot vines at the front, then the historical buildings combined with the new designs by Moneo and, in the background, the poplars and ashes along the river bank.
A visit to the Señorío de Arínzano winery gives the impression of a

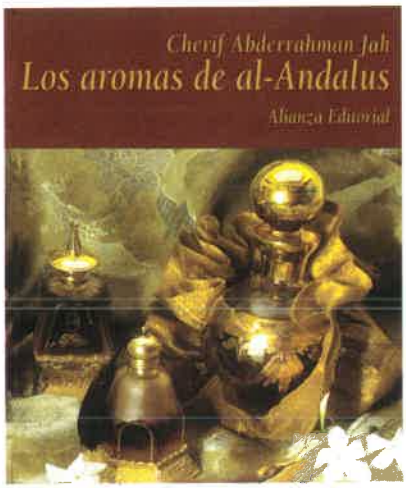
place in which nature and art come together, similar to Chillida Leku, created by Eduardo Chillida (1924-2002) at Hernani (*Spain Gourmetour* N° 52), or the Oma Wood painted by Agustín Ibarrola (1930) at Cortezubi, both of them in the Basque Country.
More than a place of work, this winery seems to be on a parallel with the many Moneo creations for the exhibition of art—the National Museum of Roman Art in Mérida (1986) (*Spain Gourmetour* N° 47), the Thyssen Bornemisza Museum in Madrid (1992), the Fundación Pilar y Joan Miró in Palma de Mallorca (1993), the Davis Art Museum in Massachusetts (1993), the Stockholm Museum of Modern Art and Architecture (1995) or his current work on the extension to the Prado Museum in Madrid.

... and Vanguardist Design

In Laguardia (Basque Country), another new winery can be seen. The Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava (1951) designed the Ysios bodega as a sculpture in the midst of vineyards set against the harsh, grey background of the Cantabrian mountains.
This building—a large, longitudinal pavilion 198 meters long and covering a total of 8,000 square meters / 86,111 sq ft—stands out because of its vanguardist external appearance. The wavy, aluminum roof establishes the building's profile, with reminiscences of the curved roofs built by the modernist architect, Antonio Gaudí (1852–1926), in the Battló house in Barcelona. The façade, too, is curved. Thin strips of cedar wood contrast with aluminum, drawing winding lines reminiscent of Gaudí's Milá house in Barcelona. Finally, a small artificial lake completes the complex and also pays homage to Gaudí by using white *trencadís*, a decorative style based on broken tiles that was introduced by the world-renowned Catalonian architect. On sunny days, the building's curves are reflected in the lake, looking like huge barrels. The light shining on the building gives it life. The reflections of the sunlight on the aluminum and the lake change color, just as the vineyards do with the changing seasons.
Inside the building, the different halls mark the different stages of the vinification process and lead to the final stage when the Ysios wines, bearing the DOCa Rioja label, are tasted. The tasting room is like a viewing tower that breaks away from the curves of the façade and is suspended between the ageing hall and the Laguardia hill with its 12th-century Torre Abacial silhouetted against the horizon.
Beyond Laguardia, this route combining contemporary architecture and wine continues along the medieval Pilgrims' Road to Santiago: Norman Foster (1935) has built a bodega for CVNE, and Marqués de Riscal has commissioned one from Frank Gehry (1929). Back in the 12th century, Aymeric Picaud rightly recommended that pilgrims traveling through these lands would find "good bread, excellent wine, meat and fish and all sorts of blessings". Added to these today are some unforgettable buildings.

Bingen Urquijo Garay, *an information manager and enthusiast of architecture, has created guided routes around many of Madrid's most interesting buildings.*

LASTING IMPRESSIONS



Spaniards have often called their food culture a crossroads for the way that culinary influences from far and near, east and west, have both filtered down into everyday cooking.
The most important of the far-flung traditions is that of the Muslims who ruled parts of Spain for eight centuries. **Los aromas de al-Andalus** (The Aromas of Al-Andalus) by Cherif Abderrahman Jah, President of the Madrid-based Fundación de Cultura Islámica, is a rare and admirably well-documented attempt to reconstruct the culture of natural fragrances and aromas nurtured in al-Andalus, today's Andalusia. After tracking the spice routes between al-Andalus' ports and cities, the author analyzes aromas in different areas of life—the market, the mosque, the home, the kitchen and pharmaceutical-cosmetic body care. The book closes with a detailed catalog of the aromatic, fruit-bearing and ornamental plants that would have been found in the gardens of Al-Andalus, bringing together references from the various treatises written at the time. Finally, tantalizingly, the author mentions that he sees such work as the first step towards the reconstruction of such gardens. *(Alianza Editorial-Fundación de Cultura Islamica; www.funci.org)*
Another tradition, far less explored in book form, is that of Gypsy cooking. So **La cocina gitana de Matilde Amaya** (The Gypsy Cooking of Matilde Amaya) is more than welcome. It's a straightforward book of a hundred recipes from Andalusian-born Matilde, wife of flamenco guitarist Juan Habichuela, and a fine cook in her own right. There are lots of the healthy, often satisfyingly soupy vegetable and fish dishes for which Gypsy cooking is best known—for example, *potaje de judías blancas con fideos y lechuga* (white beans braised with noodles and lettuce) *ensalada gitana* (potato, orange, egg, salt-cod and olive salad) and *lentejas con majao* (lentils with pork and black sausage)—and plenty of slowly fused flavors. Stock up on garlic, tomato, fresh mint and cumin seeds before setting to work with this book. *(Belacqua de Ediciones y Publicaciones S.L.; Fax: (+34) 934 263 730)*
The winning entry in **Cuadernos del Fogón I. Relatos culinarios** (The Oven Notebooks I. Culinary Tales), is a beautifully turned Argentinian short-story that plays with magic realism and the sensuality of food. All 19 pieces in this collection were written as entries for a competition organized jointly by Radio France International and Fogón Saint Julien, the Spanish restaurant in Paris. They called for original recipes from Spain or Latin America presented in literary form. It must be said that the Latin American entries stand

out, both for their originality and for the quality of the writing—and, as noted food journalist Oscar Caballero says in his excellent introduction, because there is a huge, rich tradition there, closely related to Spanish cooking, to which we have paid little attention. *(Editorial Zendrera Zariquiey; www.editorialzendrera.com)*

In Brief

CHEFS' COOKING

La cocina es bella (Cooking is Beautiful) Santi Santamaria's latest book is an anthology of his articles published in Catalan newspaper *La Vanguardia*. The result is a chatty book of achievable home and armchair cooking. Each of the 80 recipes comes with a short text on a theme and snippets of culinary information plus suggested further reading. A good buy.

Text
Vicky Hayward

(Ediciones Everest, S.A.; www.everest.es)

Mis mejores recetas con arroces (My Best Rice Recipes) The sixth in this series of a dozen ringbound step-by-step cookbooks for home-cooking focuses on rice, not always in traditional Spanish terms but certainly with Iberian flair. *(Nowtilus Gastronomía; www.mismejoresrecetas.com)*

Quesos españoles en la cocina (Spanish Cheeses in the Kitchen) Spaniards have always tended to eat their cheese simply, as it comes, although often accompanied by other flavors. Here Leonese chef Carlos Cidón and cheese-lover Enric Canut (see p. 25) have combined forces to write a book to encourage cooking with Spanish cheeses. Aimed at both the chef and the home-cook, it includes advice on cheeseboards and tasting. The first recipes I'll be trying are the Tronchón cheeses with molasses and pumpkin seed oil, and the brochette of marinated fresh Cebreiro with anchovy ice cream, garlicked breadcrumbs and quince paste. *(Editorial Everest S.A.; www.everest.es)*

S.21 La nueva generación de la confitería española (S.21 New Generation Spanish Confectioners) Confectionery hardly seems to be the right word for the stunning creations running through this anthology, which draws together 150 recipes from eight young confectioners. Seven are Catalan and three of them are brothers, from the Balaguer family (see review of Oriol's earlier book in *Spain Gourmetour* N° 58.) There are lots of interesting architectural ideas and some flavor switches—how about a black olive *magdalena?* *(Montagud Editores S.A.; www.montagud.com)*

PRODUCE AND FOODS

El jamón (Cured Ham) A short but useful coffee-table book about Spain's cured ham—how and where it is produced, how to cut it and eat it, plus 15 photographs of Catalan chefs' dishes that play with its fabulous flavor. A good gift for the ham-lover. *(Loft Publications; www.loftpublications.com)*

Gourmetquesos 2003-2004 (Gourmetcheese 2003-04) José Luis Martín's book, subtitled "Guide to the 136 Best Cheeses in Spain", is the most up-to-date catalog available for Spanish cheese. Once a cheesemaker, now an organizer of tastings, the author has given excellent background on practical aspects like tastings and cheesemaking technology—although, in truth, the book is somewhat lacking in space for background history, whether agricultural or culinary, to really evoke the full character of these cheeses. On the other hand, there is a great advantage—a color photo for each cheese. Excellent address list. *(Grupo Gourmets; www.gourmets.net)*

La cocina práctica del bacalao. 100 recetas inolvidables (Practical Salt-cod Cookery. 100 Unforgettable Recipes) Among all the salt-cod books that are coming out these days, this one has a particular slant. Rather than collecting the latest creative ideas, it gives a cross-section of old and new, Basque and Catalan recipes, all made with presoaked, desalted cod. A good beginner's book. *(Keinu Ediciones; Fax: (+34) 946 311 701)*

Madrid, capital gastronómica de Europa. Mercamadrid, el gran mercado de la alimentación (Madrid, Europe's Gastronomic Capital. Mercamadrid, the Big Food Market) This large and very lavish book clearly cannot live up to an impossibly grandiose title. It is a shame that the content does not analyze the food passing through Spain's largest wholesale market more seriously since the subject is a fascinating one. Sections of traditional and creative chefs' recipes follow the main body of recipes. *(Lunwerg Editores; lunwerg.mad@retemail.es)*

Mi olivo, tu olivo, nuestro olivo (My Olive, Your Olive,

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47350 Quintanilla de Onésimo (Valladolid)
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www.arzuaganavarro.com
E-mail: bodeg@arzuaganavarro.com

EXPORTERS

The following list includes a selection of exporters. It is not intended as a comprehensive guide and for space reasons, we cannot list all the companies devoted to export of the featured products. The information included is supplied by the individual sources.

Food Products

Cheeses with PDO

Consejo Regulador DOP Cabrales
Tel: (+34) 985 845 130
Fax: (+34) 985 845 335
queso@cabrales.org
www.queso.cabrales.org

Consejo Regulador DOP Idiazábal
Tel: (+34) 945 289 971
Fax: (+34) 945 121 386
contacto@quesoidiazabal.com
www.quesoidiazabal.com

Consejo Regulador DOP Mahón-Menorca
Tel: (+34) 971 362 295
Fax: (+34) 971 368 260
quesomahon@infotelcom.es

Consejo Regulador DOP Picón-Bejes-Tresviso
Tel: (+34) 942 269 855
Fax: (+34) 942 269 856
odeca@odeca.es

Consejo Regulador DOP Queso de Cantabria
Tel: (+34) 942 269 855
Fax: (+34) 942 269 856
odeca@odeca.es

Consejo Regulador DOP Queso de la Serena
Tel/Fax: (+34) 924 772 114
info@quesoserena.com
www.quesoserena.com

Consejo Regulador DOP Queso de Murcia y Queso de Murcia al vino
Tel: (+34) 968 783 804
Fax: (+34) 968 783 696

Consejo Regulador DOP Queso Ibores
Tel/Fax: (+34) 927 323 076
qibores@jazfree.com
www.quesoibores.org

Consejo Regulador DOP Queso Majorero
Tel: (+34) 928 532 593
Fax: (+34) 928 870 782
quesomajorero@terra.es

Consejo Regulador DOP Queso Manchego
Tel: (+34) 926 322 666
Fax: (+34) 926 322 712
crdoqman@arrakis.es

Consejo Regulador DOP Queso Palmero
Tel/Fax: (+34) 922 417 060

Consejo Regulador DOP Queso Tetilla
Tel: (+34) 981 511 751
Fax: (+34) 981 511 864

Consejo Regulador DOP Queso Zamorano
Tel/Fax: (+34) 980 530 511
denominacion@quesozamorano.es
www.quesozamorano.es

Consejo Regulador DOP Quesucos de Liébana
Tel: (+34) 942 269 855
Fax: (+34) 942 269 856
odeca@odeca.es

Consejo Regulador DOP Roncal
Tel: (+34) 948 013 045
Fax: (+34) 948 232 070
iconsejo@nasersa.com
www.denominacionesnavarra.com

Consejo Regulador DOP Torta del Casar
Tel: (+34) 927 290 713
Fax: (+34) 927 291 654
info@tortadelcasar.org
www.tortadelcasar.org

APQE (Association for the Promotion of Quesos de España)
Tel/Fax: (+34) 914 312 862
info@asocpromocionquesos.es
www.asocpromocionquesos.es

FENIL (National Federation of Dairy Industries)
Tel: (+34) 915 762 100
Fax: (+34) 915 762 117
info@fenil.org
www.fenil.org

Peaches DOP Melocotón de Calanda

Cooperativa San Lorenzo
Tel: (+34) 976 638 004
Fax: (+34) 976 639 215
admon@magalia.org
www.magalia.org

Cooperativa San Miguel (Cofruval)
Tel/Fax: (+34) 978 838 000
cofruval@cofruval.com
www.cofruval.com

Frudecas
Tel: (+34) 976 637 240
Fax: (+34) 976 637 204

Frutícola Bajo Aragonesa
Tel: (+34) 976 633 315
Fax: (+34) 976 633 336

Frutícola Maellana
Tel: (+34) 976 638 165
Fax. (+34) 976 638 759

La Calandina
Tel: (+34) 978 846 278
Fax: (+34) 978 846 839

Regulatory Council: Consejo Regulador D.O. Melocotón de Calanda
Tel: (+34) 978 835 693
Fax: (+34) 978 834 358
info@melocotondecalanda.com
www.melocotondecalanda.com

Source: Regulatory Council of PDO Melocotón de Calanda

Wines

DO Rías Baixas

Consejo Regulador DO Rías Baixas
Tel: (+34) 986 854 850
Fax: (+34) 986 864 546
consejo@doriasbaixas.com
www.doriasbaixas.com

ADINDEX

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Spanish Institut for Foreign Trade
Tel: (34) 913 496 100
Fax: (34) 914 316 128
icex@icex.es
www.icex.es
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Tel: (+34) 973 501 212
Fax: (+34) 973 314 668
Abp.export@borges.es
www.aceitesborges.es
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Ángel Camacho, S.A. (Fragata)
Tel: (+34) 955 854 700
Fax: (+34) 955 850 145
info@acamacho.com
www.acamacho.com
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Araex-Rioja Alavesa Export Group
Tel: (+34) 945 141 800
Fax: (+34) 945 143 156
araex@araex.com
www.araex.com
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Tel: (34) 983 681 146
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bodeg@arzuaganavarro.com
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Tel: (+34) 948 811 000
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www.bodegaschivite.com
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Bodegas Franco Españolas
Tel: (+34) 941 251 300
Fax: (+34) 941 262 948
francoespanolas@francoespanolas.com
www.francoespanolas.com
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Compañía Envasadora Loreto, S.A.
Tel: (+34) 954 113 825
Fax: (+34) 955 711 056
info@cenlo.com
www.cenlo.com
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Conservas Artesanas Rosara, S.A.
Tel: (+34) 902 304 010
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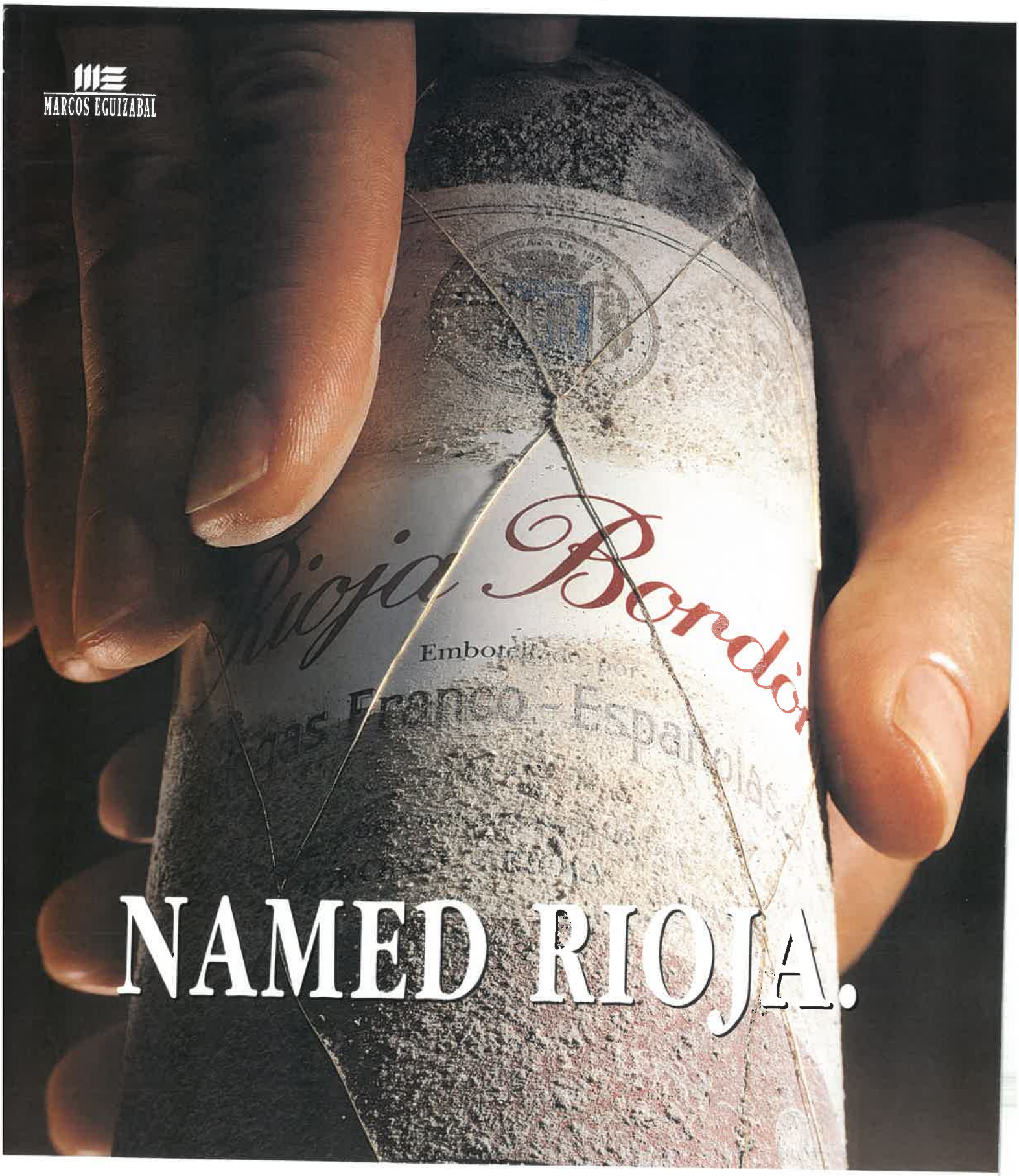

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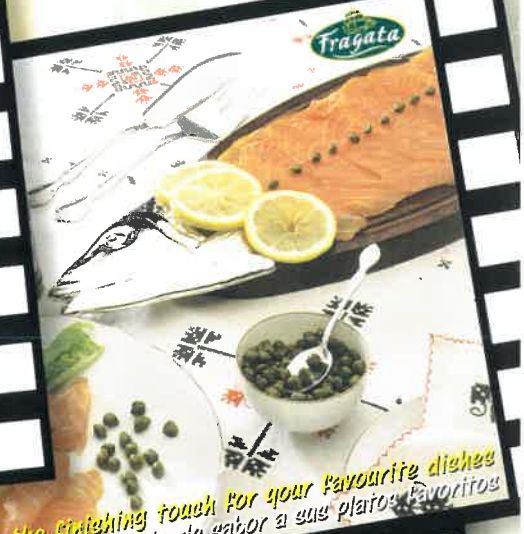
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GLOSSARY

Cava

This is the Designation of Origin for sparkling wines produced by the traditional method, that is to say, that the secondary fermentation takes place in the same bottle in which it is sold. The cava demarcated region is in several zones, the most important of which is Catalonia. The others are Aragon, Navarre, La Rioja, Castile-León, Extremadura and Valencia. The Cava Designation should not be confused with other DOs that might be associated with the provinces in which cava is produced. The minimum aging period for cava wines is nine months in the bottle, though many spend between 18 months and three years, and a few up to five years.

Sherry

The aging system for sherry is the *solera* system, which is made up of a number of stages through which the younger wines pass, acquiring the characteristics of the older wines, thus ensuring the continuity of style. The butts (oak casks of 500 liters each) in the earlier stages are known as *criaderas*, and the last and oldest butts in the system are the solera stage from which the wine is taken for bottling. The solera stage is topped up from the next oldest stage (the first and oldest criadera) and that in turn is topped up from the next oldest. There is no stipulated number of stages, but four to six would be the average. No more than 30% of the wine may be removed from the solera in any one year.

Wine Aging Terms

Crianza. This term is reserved for wines aged in the wood and bottle for at least two years, six months of which must be in oak casks. (Note: In several regions the minimum time in cask is 12 months.)

Reserva. There are two types of standard for the use of this designation. Red wines must age for a minimum of 36 months in the wood and bottle, at least 12 of them in oak casks.

For rosé and white wines, the minimum period is 24 months, six of them in oak casks.

Gran Reserva. This term is used exclusively for red and claret wines that have aged for at least 24 months in oak casks followed by at least 36 months in the bottle. For white and rosé wines, the minimum period is 48 months of which a minimum of six months must be in the wood.

Notes:

1. Many DOs insist that the oak casks must be no more than 225 liters, however, national legislation allows oak casks up to 1,000 liters.

2. Wines are often kept in vats for a few months prior to aging in casks, so the arithmetic varies for each one.

3. Many bodegas age their wines for more than the stipulated minimum periods.

Designation of Origin (DO) and Protected Designation of Origin (PDO)

Designation of Origin is the official Spanish denomination covering products whose raw materials are produced and manufactured within a specific geographical area, and which have distinctive qualities and characteristics due, mainly, to the natural environment, manufacturing and aging methods. In recent years the term Designation of Origin (DO) has been replaced by Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) in order to adapt to EU terminology, but only when referring to food products. For wine the term Designation of Origin (DO) is still in use, because the terminology in this sector is not unified in the EU.

Qualified Designation of Origin (DOCa)

A DOCa is a Designation of Origin that fulfills the strictest requirements, among which should be highlighted the following:

The price of the grapes used in winemaking must be greater than 200% of the national average price.

Only wines bottled exclusively at the original wineries will be sold.

At least 90% of the vineyard dedicated to winemaking must be inscribed in the registry of DOCa vines; and in the registry of wineries, it must be stipulated that these carry out at least 90% of the wine production within the geographical unit.

Quality control of the vines must be carried out by the regulatory council, batch by batch and with a volume less than or equal to 1,000 hectoliters per batch.

At present, there are two DOCa for wine in Spain: the Rioja DOCa and the Priorato DOCa.

Protected Geographic Identification (PGI)

The PGI covers products characterized by a relation to their geographical setting, with the use of certain raw materials, a determined method of production and/or manufacturing, but differs from a PDO in that these three factors do not necessarily have to coincide.

Each DO, DOCa, PDO or PGI is managed by a *Consejo Regulador* (CR) or Regulatory Council, which sees to the enforcement of the regulations.

CREDITS

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